

Dubious liaisons: a review of Alvin Goldman's *Liaisons*: philosophy meets the cognitive and social sciences

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ABSTRACT *Alvin Goldman's recent collection (Goldman, 1992) includes many of the important and seminal contributions made by him over the last three decades to epistemology, philosophy of mind, and analytic metaphysics. Goldman is an acknowledged leader in efforts to put material from cognitive and social science to good philosophical use. This is the "liaison" which Goldman takes his own work to exemplify and advance. Yet the essays contained in Liaisons chart an important evolution in Goldman's own views about the relation between philosophy and empirical inquiry. Goldman raises, if only unwittingly, the question of what philosophy per se contributes to the encounter. The way in which Goldman's work problematizes the claim that philosophy forms a working liaison with the cognitive and social sciences is revealed by examining two sets of distinctions prominent in Goldman's analyses in this volume. I trace how each pair of terms—philosophy versus science, individual versus social—is used by Goldman and suggest that it is less clear than one would like how these key notions are or could be distinguished from one another. Doubts about these distinctions, at least as Goldman employs them, suggest more general concerns regarding Goldman's style of naturalism and the status of philosophy as a source of knowledge.*

Liaisons: philosophy meets the cognitive and social sciences

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Alvin Goldman's recent collection (Goldman, 1992) includes many of the important and seminal contributions made by him over the last three decades to epistemology, philosophy of mind, and analytic metaphysics. Goldman is an acknowledged leader in efforts to put material from cognitive and social science to good philosophical use. This is the "liaison" which Goldman takes his own work to exemplify and advance.

This volume of essays is...a partial record of how one philosopher has been driven by the "logic" of philosophical problems toward questions and with the basic rationale and structure for such interchange....Many of these essays address two fields of philosophy—epistemology and metaphysics—

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that were traditionally seen as *purely* philosophical, untainted by messy empirical facts and free of the paradigms and pursuits of empirical science. That is not the scenario I envisaged for their field. Even epistemology and metaphysics, properly conceptualized, would invite contributions from empirical disciplines. (Goldman, 1992, p. 1)

In this regard, this collection recapitulates “the naturalists return” to philosophy. In situating Goldman within the naturalist camp, I do no more than follow Goldman’s self-characterization. Goldman speaks of “my approach to naturalistic epistemology” and, in particular, his “wider naturalistic conception of epistemology (or epistemics) embracing the social as well as the psychological” (Goldman, 1992, p. 6).

But how Goldman imagines this relationship to run changes in the course of the essays collected in this book [1]. For the essays contained in *Liaisons* chart an important evolution in Goldman’s own views about the relation between philosophy and empirical inquiry. The volume records, somewhat against the author’s intention, Goldman’s own shift from someone whose main concern was to provide a “pure” analysis to someone who sees the empirical work as integral to any account of the putatively conceptual.

In particular, I suggest, the evolution of Goldman’s own thoughts on these matters indicates just how problematic for philosophy the proposed liaison is [2]. His subtitle—philosophy meets the cognitive and social sciences—hints at the underlying problem. What is the nature of the “meeting” that Goldman effects? Goldman himself stresses philosophy’s “consumer” relationship to these sciences and “the philosophical uses to which such results might be put” (Goldman, 1992, pp. 2–3). In putting matters this way, Goldman raises, if only unwittingly, the question of what philosophy *per se* contributes to the encounter. That is, on any proposed meeting, does philosophy, in conceding relevance of the empirical work to its task, ultimately invite full assimilation of the philosophical enterprise into the related sciences? Indeed, my suggestion is that in following out the changes in Goldman’s epistemological views one maps, as well, the fate of philosophy *vis-a-vis* empirical science in areas of common interest.

The way in which Goldman’s work problematizes the claim that philosophy forms a working liaison with the cognitive and social sciences is revealed by examining two sets of distinctions prominent in Goldman’s analyses in this volume. One set is the distinction between, on the one hand, philosophy, and, on the other, the sciences (natural, cognitive, and social). The distinction presumes that philosophy and the sciences represent distinct methods for acquiring knowledge. The other set of distinctions is between individual and social epistemics. I trace how each pair of terms—philosophy versus science, individual versus social—is used by Goldman and suggest that it is less clear than one would like how these key notions are or could be distinguished from one another. Doubts about these distinctions, at least as Goldman employs them, suggest more general concerns regarding Goldman’s style of naturalism and the status of philosophy as a source of knowledge.

Naturalism in epistemology can be characterized negatively by its eschewal of

any notions of analytic or *a priori* truths. Positively, naturalism insists on seeing a continuity (perhaps a coincidence) between epistemological and scientific inquiry [3]. Even this minimalist formulation suffices, however, to generate a basic question regarding any proposal to naturalize epistemology. Can these defining characteristics be consistently conjoined? [4].

This question arises because, it appears, any attempt to marry scientific method—understood as our most advanced methods of empirical inquiry—and epistemology—*inquiry seeking to ascertain the norms of knowledge, justification, etc.*—engenders what I shall term the “naturalist’s dilemma”. If philosophy is *not* a science (under some naturalistic construal of “science”), then it has no place on the roster of legitimate forms of inquiry. So philosophy, in the guise of epistemology, could not contribute to a naturalized account of the nature of knowledge and justification. Yet, if it *is* a science, then one or both of the following problems would seem to obtain. Either epistemological inquiry will be question-begging—an effort to evaluate the methods and results of empirical inquiry by using some of those very methods or results—or impossible, since one cannot derive normative conclusions from empirical/scientific inquiry.

The second horn of the dilemma may be reformulated in the following way. Any move to naturalize epistemology must either invoke non-naturalistic modes of normative analysis, and so give lie to the basic claim of naturalism, or fail in the end to provide an account of norms, and so not be epistemology. In short, a naturalized epistemology, if epistemology, cannot be (fully) naturalized, and if naturalized, cannot be epistemology. Naturalized epistemology thus seems to be a genuinely “impossible science”.

The views of W.V.O. Quine provide a convenient counterpoint to those of Goldman’s regarding the fate of naturalists with either horn of the naturalist’s dilemma. Naturalists such as Quine are committed to what might be termed “methodological monism” [5], and so appear threatened by the second horn—no normative content. For naturalists of this persuasion, “philosophy” is not (now, anyway) the name of any recognized science.

Others, like Goldman, understand naturalism as tolerating “methodological dualism”, and so run afoul of the first horn of the dilemma—failing to truly naturalize epistemology. Goldman would like to have matters both ways, *i.e.* to separate himself from those who insist on pursuing a purely *a priori* analysis of epistemic notions but yet still maintain that there are techniques—specifically philosophical ones—distinct from what we now classify as science. Psychology, for example, may play a part in epistemology on this view but, *pace* Quine, philosophy makes independent contributions to the analysis of knowledge as well [6]. Goldman, unlike Quine, construes naturalized epistemology as a type of partnership, a *liaison* of two distinct forms of inquiry.

In what follows, I bate worries about the adequacy of naturalism to the task of legitimating epistemic norms. My concern will focus, rather, on the adequacy and viability of methodological dualism to the task of constructing a naturalized epistemology. For the fulfillment of that task is what the meeting of philosophy with the cognitive and social sciences is to accomplish [7].

At least through the publication in 1986 of *Epistemology and cognition*, Goldman reserves for epistemology the task of identifying the normative content of epistemic concepts. To the cognitive and the social sciences he allots the work of identifying what processes, rules, etc. actually possess the good-making qualities identified through philosophical analysis. But it is precisely his views on how to divide the descriptive and normative labor that shift in Goldman's writings that post-date *Epistemology and cognition*. The question raised, then, by key epistemological essays in *Liaisons*—"Strong and weak justification" and "Epistemic folkways and scientific epistemology"—is how they fit with his earlier *Epistemology and cognition* and the more recent "Naturalistic epistemology and reliabilism" (Goldman, 1994).

The important shift is that Goldman now acknowledges [8] (Goldman, 1994, p. 316 fn. 17) that he envisions scientific epistemology as contributing a specifically normative element (Goldman, 1992, p. 156). What he now refers to as normative scientific epistemology is reformist, aiming at "the formulation of a more adequate, sound, or systematic set of epistemic norms, in some way(s) transcending our naive epistemic repertoire" (Goldman, 1992, p. 156). Thus, Goldman no longer insists on strictly delimiting naturalism by appeal to pre-analytic epistemic notions. His revised view "goes beyond the more limited naturalism of *Epistemology and cognition*, which denied the necessity of using cognitive psychology at the purely 'conceptual' level of the theory of justification, i.e., at the level of the criterion" (Goldman, 1994, p. 316, fn. 17). It is in tracing out the implications of this concession that has made vivid the problematic status of philosophical analysis within Goldman's account.

However else Goldman has modified his reliabilist epistemology, the core notion of reliability has remained the same. What qualifies a belief as justified or as an instance of knowledge remains connected to the reliability of the process by which one comes to hold that belief. In particular, it must be a process which produces a higher ratio of true beliefs to false ones:

What must be added to true belief to qualify as knowledge? One popular answer, found in the *reliability* theory of knowledge, says that to be a case of knowing, a true belief must be formed by a cognitive process or method that is generally reliable, i.e., one that generally produces true beliefs...Under the reliability theory this question [i.e. the questions of the sources and prospects for human knowledge] becomes: Which mental faculties and procedures are capable of generating true or accurate beliefs, and which are liable to produce false or inaccurate beliefs? (Goldman, 1993, p. 2)

The belief-forming mechanisms in question may be physiological processes, individual methods, or socially/institutionally instantiated procedures (corresponding here to Goldman's distinction between primary, secondary, and tertiary epistemics) [9].

But to what extent is Goldman willing to countenance an interpenetration of the empirical and the conceptual? The mark of full interpenetration, in this regard, would be if normative scientific epistemology alone ascertained which epistemic norms actually are truth-linked. If one fully delineates epistemic norms by scientific lights, one has become a "radical naturalist" *à la* Quine. In the context of the essays

in *Liaisons*, the question is how one validates the claim that certain reliable processes, rules, or institutions are truth linked. For it is the truth-linkedness of all forms of reliabilism that makes it appropriate for Goldman's conception of epistemics [10].

One way of differentiating Goldman's naturalism from that of Quine proceeds from considerations of how Goldman ultimately distinguishes reliable processes from those that are merely scientifically acceptable. Some such principled distinction is needed, one would assume, in order to underwrite methodological dualism. Without dualism, science does all the normative work.

Given a concern to understand how Goldman saves philosophy from assimilation into one or another science within the naturalizing project, one can begin by noting how Goldman locates himself relative to Quine within his (Goldman's) own typology of naturalistic epistemologies. In "Naturalistic epistemology and reliabilism", Goldman examines naturalized epistemology in terms of three basic divisions: meta-epistemic forms of naturalism (MEN), substantive kinds (SEN), and methodological variants (MDN). MEN concerns the quasi-metaphysical question of what features of the world might be acceptable for a naturalist in an analysis of epistemic terms (e.g. reduction to states or processes, supervenience on physical states, etc.). Theories classified under SEN are those that attempt to specify which natural properties are epistemically "good-making". The methodological variant (MDN) "claims that epistemology should either consist in empirical science, or should at least be informed and beholden to the results of scientific disciplines" (Goldman, 1994, p. 305).

Reliabilism ultimately receives an analysis within each of these categories of naturalism. Reliabilism is a form of substantive naturalism insofar as it belongs to a class of theories "that invoke physico-causal processes of the epistemic agent, or perhaps relations that obtain between the cognizing agent and its environment" (Goldman, 1994, p. 302). Yet, Goldman goes on to say, the "substantive views standardly considered naturalistic are closely associated with the third conception of epistemic naturalism, the methodological conception. The latter holds that epistemology is (or should be), in whole or part, a scientific or empirical discipline rather than an a priori one" (Goldman, 1994, p. 302). Substantively, reliabilism concerns itself with questions regarding the characteristics of reliable processes. Methodologically, a naturalist asks how to identify scientifically which processes are reliable. Ontologically (and meta-epistemically), reliabilism is understood as consisting of those truth-conducive physico-causal processes on which reliable processes supervene.

In his discussion of these categories, Goldman marks a change in his own views from one where science was held to have *no* role in ascertaining epistemic norms to the view that "psychological theories of concepts may be instructive in illuminating normative epistemic concepts such as justification and rationality" (Goldman, 1994, p. 307: see, in general, the discussion on pp. 306–308). Yet, despite the shift away from the methodological strictures advocated in *Epistemology and cognition* and towards the "unlimited naturalism" associated with Quine, Goldman's way of distinguishing his position from Quine's does not alter from that found in the earlier

work. For Goldman continues to interpret Quine's project as one which eschews a concern with epistemic norms: "Quine's incorporation of epistemology within natural science is made possible...by his assignment to epistemology of the task of answering a purely *explanatory* question, viz. [quoting from Quine], 'how we human animals can have managed to arrive at science from such information' (viz. irritations of our surfaces)" (Goldman, 1994, p. 305). Without directly endorsing the complaints of those such as Kim (Kim, 1988, p. 389; see also Putnam, 1982), Goldman goes on to write that other methodological naturalists—including himself, it turns out—"place greater weight on the normative dimension than Quine" (Goldman, 1994, p. 306). That is, Goldman the substantive naturalist appears to distinguish himself from Quine the methodological naturalist by virtue of the fact that Quine's methodological naturalism replaces issues of belief appraisal with those of explaining their causal origin. In contrast, one might be tempted to read Goldman as holding that a substantive naturalist such as himself is not necessarily committed to methodological monism.

Yet, distinguishing between their respective varieties of naturalism proves more complicated than the substantive-methodological distinction initially suggests. For, in "Naturalistic epistemology and reliabilism", Goldman identifies himself as a type of methodological naturalist as well. Goldman had held in *Epistemology and cognition* that a non-scientific method—conceptual analysis, or some analog—would identify the criteria for correct justificational rules. These, in turn, would inform epistemologists as to which results of scientific psychology were the ones germane to actually justifying beliefs: "There I contended that identifying the criterion of rightness for justificational rules is not a province of empirical psychology, but that the choice of certain rightness criteria would invite contributions from scientific psychology" (Goldman, 1994, p. 306). Now, however, he allows that empirical psychology can contribute at the critical or conceptual level as well. Our question is: to what extent?

Goldman develops how this interpenetration of the conceptual/normative enterprise and the scientific/descriptive one occurs by discussing three grades of normative involvement. Goldman situates his current understanding of reliabilism at the third and deepest level of normative involvement [11].

[T]he third level of normative involvement is one that appeals to cognitive science, including psychology and linguistics, to help elucidate our normative epistemic standards. This approach presupposes that the way to get at our epistemic standards or criteria is to illuminate the nature of our normative epistemic concepts. To this extent, it resembles "analytical" philosophical methodology. This approach claims, however, that the nature of mental concepts is a problem for psychological science, and that psychological theories of concepts may be instructive in illuminating (normative) epistemic concepts such as justification and rationality. In other words, the theory of epistemic norms invokes scientific psychology not to study the epistemic agent but to study the concept of the epistemic judge or evaluator. This is my (more recent) approach...(Goldman, 1994, p. 307)

The moral is that science influences our account of the normative insofar as results in, for example, cognitive science alert us to how certain biases might be endemic to epistemic agents, and so, presumably, alert us to needed corrections of the intuitive criterion of justifiedness. Yet, the third grade of normative involvement is clearly Quinean, for it specifies no principled line between the conceptual and the empirical. Thus, however one is to distinguish Goldman from Quine, it cannot be that one is but the other is not a methodological naturalist. Both, according to Goldman, now are.

Yet Goldman must make his version of monism square with two other complications he introduces into reliabilist theory in *Liaisons*, viz. the distinction between “strong” and “weak” justification, on the one hand, and on the other, that between what I shall term “epistemic agents” and “epistemic evaluators” (Goldman, 1992, “Strong and weak justification”). The first of these distinctions is meant to capture the intuitive difference between epistemically blameless reasoning—justifiedness by the best standards available to one—and actually being justified, i.e. justification which uses reliable processes which are truth-linked (see, in particular, Goldman, 1992, pp. 128–129). The latter pairing makes explicit the third versus first person perspective on epistemic performance implicit in the first distinction.

The twist, however, is how Goldman takes the strong/weak distinction to sit with the second—evaluator/agent—pair: “The present approach...makes an innovation in naturalistic epistemology. Whereas earlier naturalistic epistemologists have focused exclusively on the psychology of the epistemic agent, the present paper (along with the preceding essay [‘Strong and weak justification’]) also highlights the psychology of the epistemic evaluator” (Goldman, 1992, p. 163). The reliabilist analysis “highlights”, as Goldman puts it, the psychology of the epistemic evaluator (Goldman, 1992, p. 163) since the evaluator’s states, i.e. the list of epistemic virtues and vices of the evaluator “is intended to capture what I call...the *strong* conception of justification” (Goldman, 1992, p. 175, fn. 7). What distinguishes evaluators from agents is precisely that the former, but not the latter, are possibly strongly justified.

This account of evaluators as potentially exemplifying strong—actual—justification puts Goldman’s remarks regarding normative scientific epistemology in a very different light. For, “the theory of epistemic norms invokes scientific psychology not to study the epistemic agent but to study the concept(s) of the epistemic judge or evaluator” (Goldman, 1994, p. 307). But since evaluators *are* strongly justified if anyone is, this implies that in studying the evaluator, we come as close as we can to the study of actually reliable processes. So it now seems that Goldman holds that normative scientific epistemology identifies, if anything does, the processes that *actually* are reliable [12]. If this is so, whatever reliable content there is to the notion of strong justification would be that found in empirical studies of the psychology of epistemic evaluators—those processes identified by normative scientific epistemology.

Goldman moves towards giving a normative role to scientific findings because, he recognizes, empirical studies can reveal that some epistemic folkways thought reliable in fact are not so. Intuition cannot be the final arbiter of the legitimacy of an epistemic norm for that reason. This consideration led Goldman to distinguish as

well between strong and weak justification. Having made this distinction, however, he finds himself obliged to acknowledge that these different forms of justification are instantiated in persons—epistemic agents and evaluators respectively. For, Goldman believes, some of us do form justified beliefs and do possess knowledge.

But now the question is how normative scientific epistemology functions to distinguish between alleged agents and evaluators. It can only do so, of course, if it identifies those processes, whatever they are, that are constitutive of strong justification, for that is what separates putative evaluators from agents. Yet, surprisingly, Goldman does *not* map the relation between normative scientific epistemology and epistemic evaluators in the straightforward way just suggested. Rather, he claims that his account of epistemic evaluators belongs to the meta-epistemic category of “conceptual-linguistic” (rather than ontological) analysis. A paradigm case of a meta-epistemic *ontological* analysis is understanding epistemic properties as supervening on some set of physico-causal ones. Just this sort of ontological characterization, recall, was previously identified as the meta-epistemic basis of reliabilism understood as a substantive naturalist doctrine. Now we are told, however, that the analysis of epistemic evaluators achieved through normative scientific epistemology is *not* ontological, that it aims only “to provide a psychologically plausible explanatory theory of how epistemic evaluators make their epistemic judgments, *without necessarily identifying the ‘property’ of justification itself*” (Goldman 1994, p. 314, emphasis mine) [13]. This, however, is to *deny* that normative scientific epistemology yields any analysis of evaluators’ concepts which entails that they are reliable. For actually to be reliable, they must in fact supervene on the appropriate physico-causal properties.

When introduced, the agent-evaluator distinction contrasted first- and third-person views of one’s epistemic performance, where the third-person perspective encompassed the use of actually reliable processes. Establishing the third-person perspective, in turn, was the task to be abetted by normative scientific epistemology. Yet Goldman insists that processes thought reliable by epistemic evaluators need not actually be so:

Suppose, for example, that evaluators have made mistakes in estimating the reliabilities of certain processes. Suppose they have assigned “virtue” status to certain processes in the mistaken belief that those processes are reliable. If a belief is (known to be) caused by one of these processes, then the evaluators will *judge* it to be justified. But is it *really* justified? This sort of “ontological” question is one I am not currently prepared to answer.... Methodologically, however, I think that the preferable way to proceed is to try to get as good a handle as we can on the...procedures that are utilized by epistemic evaluators. (Goldman, 1994, p. 315)

But if the conceptual linguistic approach yields only what Goldman says it does, viz. offers just “a psychological account of when epistemic evaluators judge a belief to be justified”, (Goldman, 1994, p. 303) then there is no epistemic difference between agents and evaluators. Each person is simply in the position of attempting to be epistemically blameless.

What Goldman appears to attribute to evaluators with one hand—strong justificational status certified by the findings of normative scientific epistemology—he takes away with the other. For by making the analysis conceptual linguistic rather than ontological, he denies that they are strongly justified solely by virtue of being epistemic judges. Epistemic evaluators only judge by the best methods available to them, which may or may not be actually reliable. Neither their perceived view of their epistemic status nor their actual epistemic status marks evaluators as necessarily strongly justified. They are, therefore, epistemic agents [14]. Read as a meta-epistemological conceptual-linguistic analysis, the agent/evaluator distinction becomes vacuous, but without the agent-evaluator distinction one forgoes the claim that a normative scientific epistemology delivers an account of actually reliable processes.

That Goldman's analysis vacillates, in the formulations just traced, between the ontological and the conceptual linguistic is no accident, for he faces unacceptable consequences whichever meta-epistemic account he endorses. On the one hand, if his analysis of evaluators falls under the meta-epistemic category of ontological analysis, then viewing reliabilism methodologically, normative scientific epistemology does *all* the normative work. It must do so, for otherwise there is no way to establish the evaluator-agent distinction. No intuition remains standing unless it passes empirical tests for reliability. It is standing *qua* scientific results, not *qua* epistemic folkway, that legitimates a norm [15].

Yet, on the other hand, if the analysis only addresses how evaluators *think* of their epistemic virtues and vices, and not the actual status of these processes (the conceptual-linguistic meta-category), this "virtue reliabilism" does not connect with strong justification. In other words, Goldman's attempts to clarify reliabilism by appeal to versions of scientific epistemology never escape from the category of providing weak justification. Under this interpretation, Goldman would have done nothing to advance the *naturalization* of epistemology. The conceptual linguistic reading of reliabilism effectively prevents any interesting contribution to epistemology from actual science, for this interpretation leaves us with no reason for taking science as other than a form of weak justification. In either case, i.e. no matter which meta-epistemic account Goldman ultimately settles for, all an evaluator has to go on is normative scientific epistemology.

We are now in a position to say just how Goldman's general attempt to distinguish his brand of naturalism from that of Quine goes awry. Goldman begins by proposing to identify that proper subset of belief-forming processes which are reliable. He acknowledges that epistemic folkways that conflict with the results of normative scientific epistemology need to be reformed or discarded. That is the whole point, after all, of the concession that allows science to impact the conceptual analysis of justifiedness. For any analysis of norms, Goldman now concedes, needs to be checked for infection by biases uncovered by empirical research. But a *difference* between projects to naturalize epistemology will only be forthcoming when Goldman provides a standard independent of science by which to elucidate and legitimate the processes thought reliable as actually so.

Yet, if normative scientific epistemology identifies the psychology of those who

are strongly justified, Goldman's account of norms is indistinguishable from Quine's [16]. Substantively, Goldman's naturalized reliabilism and Quine's elimination of traditional epistemology in favor of psychology both come to seeking the certification of epistemic standards via normative scientific inquiry. If normative scientific epistemology does not yield insight into what it is to be actually justified, scientific epistemology has nothing to contribute to explicating reliabilism. Methodological dualism proves unnecessary in either case, ironically, since in one case philosophy *per se* has nothing to contribute to an account of epistemic norms, while in the other science can contribute nothing to epistemology. Either Goldman radically naturalizes reliabilism, or he has no basis for naturalizing it at all.

In sum, Goldman's cannot distinguish his brand of naturalism from more radical variants because he cannot both grant a substantive normative role to scientific epistemology and yet preserve an account of reliability which is independent of science. Moreover, given reliabilism's concerns with causal processes (among others), Goldman can hardly fail to grant that scientific results can impact on an account of what epistemic norms ought to be. For to hold otherwise would be to maintain that intuitions about or even analyses of justification could not be revised in the light of experience, and that is just false.

Goldman's conception of naturalism, I have argued, relies on a distinction between philosophy and science which his own account of the role of cognitive science in epistemology ultimately undercuts. However, doubts concerning Goldman's success in naturalizing epistemology do not obviously impact on his project of creating a social epistemics. Yet the same essay which prefigured Goldman's troubles with making epistemology naturalistic—"Epistemics Folkways and Scientific Epistemology"—contains the seeds of a basic problem with cashing out the role of the 'social' in Goldman's account.

This can be seen by comparing what Goldman says in "Epistemic folkways..." with the position developed in the very next essay in *Liaisons*, "The Foundations of social epistemics" [17]. Taken together, the essays, far from demarcating and suggesting a role for individual and social factors in epistemological analysis, deeply problematize the notions of 'the individual' and 'the social', making it ultimately unclear how they are to be differentiated, and so how they are to factor into any purported analysis.

Although Goldman groups the essays "Strong and weak justification" and "Epistemic folkways and scientific epistemology" in the section of *Liaisons* entitled "individual epistemology", it is important to note that both formulate the epistemological situation a way that makes epistemology social either by emphasis or by definition. For example, take the distinction between 'strong' and 'weak' justification. While 'strong' justification is, at least initially, defined by Goldman in individual terms—it depends on the actual reliability of processes, etc. used—'weak' justification is, by definition, justification for which one is "*faultless, blameless, or nonculpable*" (Goldman, 1992, p. 128). Goldman's examples indicate that these terms concern the cognizer's relation to his or her social/cultural situation. 'Weak justification' gets its intuitive basis "from the cultural plight of our believer" (Goldman, 1992, p. 128). More generally, apart from Robinson Crusoe type of

cases where someone is imagined to judge the reliability of methods in splendid isolation, the interesting applications of this distinction will be to those cases where one's social situation is determinative of beliefs regarding reliability. Without further worrying just now about how to specify what counts as a 'social' determinant of belief, I will take it that the very sort of "cultural plight" Goldman cites counts as a social factor if anything does.

The social is implicated by definition in Goldman's discussion of "epistemic folkways" which he characterizes as "our commonsense epistemic concepts and norms" (Goldman, 1992, p. 155). Or, as he also puts the matter, "Whatever else epistemology might proceed to do, it should at least have its roots in the concepts and practices of the folk" (Goldman, 1992, p. 155). Indeed, Goldman maintains that there is an analytic connection between the notion of epistemology and that of the meaning of 'epistemology':

If these [folk] roots are utterly rejected and abandoned, by what rights would the new discipline call itself 'epistemology' at all? It may well be desirable to reform or transcend our epistemic folkways....But it is essential to preserve continuity; and continuity can only be recognized if we have a satisfactory characterization of our epistemic folkways....So a first mission of epistemology is to describe or characterize our folkways. (Goldman, 1992, p. 156)

But however one precisely chooses to characterize the notion of folkways, they are not something that an individual concocts on his or her own. They could not be, for otherwise the practice would not be appropriately termed a 'folkway'. So, once again, if anything counts as a social influence on epistemology, folkways do. On this account, then, the social is implicated in the very meaning of 'epistemology', and Goldman reckons as among the first tasks of epistemology to categorize and assess such social factors.

But if the social is linked by definition to the epistemological project, what role, if any, is played by a study of individual cognitive practices? An answer might appear to be that scientific epistemology is concerned with epistemic folkways, and so the social, only in its descriptive aspect. However, normative scientific epistemology, concerned as it is with processes that actually are truth-linked, assesses the cognitive performance of individuals. That is, while the notions of being weakly justified, and corresponding notions of epistemic folkways, may build in a social element to any epistemic analysis, epistemology remains individually focused on the normative side, for it is not anything due to the social nature of an epistemic folkway that determines if it is actually reliable.

But this response is flawed. It appeals to an institutional set of procedures—those constituting normative scientific epistemology—to pass on the epistemic goodness of folkways. In this case, one has not broken out of the charmed circle of socially circumscribed practices. This is true whether one considers normative scientific epistemology the study of epistemic evaluators on the ontological or on the conceptual-linguistic interpretations (although, obviously, the problem is worse on

the latter interpretation). For on the conceptual-linguistic approach, one has *only* the folkways of science to go by—what evaluators believe to be reliable processes. Yet, as noted earlier, on the ontological approach, normative scientific epistemology does all the normative work, for it is an empirical question whether any process thought reliable stands in the appropriate supervenience relation with physico-causal processes. In the conceptual linguistic case, epistemology does not provide norms that ensure truth; in the ontological case, philosophy is not the engine driving the discovery of what is actually reliable. Social factors, understood either anthropologically or through the institution of science, provide the crucial standards for knowledge.

The complaint so far has been that the contrast between the individual and the social with which Goldman works is obscure on the side of the individual cognizer. For the notion of epistemic folkways, seemingly basic for Goldman's account of individual epistemology, is a collective notion. Similar consideration implicate the related notion of weak justification as well. Moreover, while the notions of strong justification and of an epistemic evaluator appear to return to an emphasis on the epistemic status of an individual cognizer, this appearance is belied by the fact that strong justification cannot be given substance apart from normative scientific epistemology, and so from an existing institutional structure. Thus, the central features of Goldman's account of individual epistemics are inextricably intertwined with social notions. To say that someone is weakly justified can only mean that they are conforming to the standards of their group or culture; to say that someone is strongly justified means only that they conform to the standards sanctioned by the institution of normative scientific epistemology. There is no characterizing the perceived epistemic status of an individual except by reference to socially-indexed criteria.

The foregoing criticisms might be thought to ignore a reply frequently offered by Goldman to such cavils. Goldman, throughout his writings, is careful to distinguish the epistemological question of knowing when one is justified, has knowledge, etc. from the question of the analysis of epistemic concepts. His claim consistently has been to provide an analysis and not, as he calls them, criteria of applicability. That is, his claim is that reliabilism represents the most plausible analysis of the concepts of knowledge, justification, etc., and that this question can be assessed and discussed independently of the question of identifying any process, rule, or institution which is in fact reliable. It may seem, however, that I have slighted just this distinction, and the way in which Goldman uses it to deflect certain criticisms of his account.

For example, in the context of defending his view about the truth linkedness of standards—veritism—as the preferred foundation for social epistemics, Goldman considers and rejects three possible criticisms of his view. These are that veritistic standards are either circular, empty, or useless (Goldman, 1992, p. 202). Goldman responds by noting that although 'truth' is implicated in the very meaning of the 'aim of inquiry', he denies that 'truth' in its turn is defined by any appeal to methods. "On a proper understanding of 'truth', it is not defined by reference to methods of truth determination, or verification. Hence, there is no circularity in

having truth-linked criteria of method appraisal" (Goldman, 1992, p. 202). On Goldman's interpretation of a realist theory of truth, the question of whether or not a proposition is true is a matter of how things actually stand regarding the relation between that proposition and the world. The issue of whether the proposition is verifiable is not germane to the question of whether or not it is true. Since veritism is the proposal to evaluate social methods by their truth-conduciveness, and since truth is explicated independently of means of verification, the goal of evaluation is specified independently of the means of achieving it. Hence, the definition is non circular.

Goldman dismisses the emptiness objection in a related but less direct manner. This objection, emanating from the work of social constructivists in the sociology of science [18], charges that the very notion of a scientific fact is itself inseparable from general beliefs that people hold, and so cannot be cited in support of beliefs. Goldman offers as a counterclaim that assuming the existence of 'facts' constitutes an inference to the best explanation of the process of demonstration and negotiation in science. In any case, Goldman insists, all that sociologists observe is "what scientists agree to *say* or *believe* about the facts" (Goldman, 1992, p. 202). As before, Goldman rests his case for the merits of veritism on an analysis of what the truth-relation is, not what people believe it to be. An account of what this relation is, in turn, is what he believes philosophy to provide.

The issue for both of the objections just noted is whether the notion of truth can be rescued from conditions implicated in ascertaining or deciding what is true. It is critical for Goldman's argument that the notion of truth be explicated not only independently of verification conditions, but also independently of language. The reason is this. He holds truth to be a relationship between a proposition and the world. A proposition has truth conditions; these truth-conditions are either satisfied or not by some fact of the matter. Unless each element is defined without reference to the other, Goldman's account *is* vulnerable to a variant of the circularity charge which Goldman otherwise dismisses. For without a rigid scheme-content distinction, there is no separating the specification of truth-conditions from whatever it is that propositions are true of. Without that separation, Goldman has no reply ready at hand to the charges that his realist notion of truth is either circular or empty.

By virtue of what relation, on Goldman's account, is a statement true? Goldman staunchly insists that, on the one hand, the world does not come to us "precategorized", but that, on the other hand, beliefs are constrained and conditioned by the world [19]:

Which things a cognizer-speaker chooses to think or say about the world is not determined by the world itself. That is a matter of human noetic activity, lexical resources in the language, and the like. A sentence or thought sign, in order to have any truth-value, must have an associated set of *conditions of truth*....But let us assume that a given utterance or thought, supplemented perhaps with certain contextual factors, determines a set of truth-conditions. The question then arises whether these conditions are satisfied or not. The satisfaction or nonsatisfaction of these conditions

depends upon the world. Truth and falsity, then, consist in the world's 'answering' or 'not answering' to whatever truth-conditions are in question....Notice that *which* truth-conditions must be satisfied is not determined by the world. Conditions of truth are laid down not by the world, but only by thinkers or speakers. This is the sense in which the world is not pre-categorized, and in which truth does not consist in mirroring of a pre-categorized world. (Goldman, 1986, p. 153)

What is not at all clear, on this formulation, is how to construe the claim that it "depends on the world" whether truth-conditions are satisfied or not. On the one hand, Goldman states that a "given utterance"—a single sentence—"determines a set of truth-conditions" which the world either "answers to" or does not. Yet, on the other hand, he expresses the view that the world does *not* come to us pre-categorized. This implies that the categorization is a result of the views one holds. But in that case, it is misleading at best to suggest that it is single sentences that have truth conditions. If categorization is language/theory driven, so must "the facts" be as well. For nothing is a fact for us unless it is categorizable.

Goldman, that is, cannot have it both ways—deny that the speaker's categories need be isomorphic with the world, and yet retain the claim that an individual proposition is true because it "fits" or "answers to" the world. For then there is no independent account to be given of 'experience' or 'the world' apart from the language one is using to characterize it. The problem is not, or not just, as Goldman remarks, that language cannot be assumed to mirror "the World" (as Putnam would say). The difficulty is that if truth is being explicated by appeal to some supposed relationship between language and "the World", the explication fails because "the World" cannot, on Goldman's own account, be given a language-independent analysis. We are thus left ignorant of what the supposed truth making relation is a relation between.

Goldman attempts to clarify his "fittingness" relation by analogizing it to the case of clothes. He notes that although the sartorial condition of fittingness is purely conventional, there is a fact of the matter, so to speak, regarding whether or not, within those conventions, clothes fit. So too, Goldman suggests, of the relation of language to the world. "*Given* truth-conditions for a sentence, or thought, what makes it true or false is surely the way the world is, or whether it fits the world" (Goldman, 1986, p. 156). But the sartorial analogy misrepresents the issue. The problem is *not* the *conventionality* of standards, but the scheme-content distinction on which Goldman's account of truth depends. Unless Goldman intends to resuscitate the view that experience provides some "fancifully fancyless medium of unvarnished news", the suggestion that truth consists in a fit between single sentences and the world is hollow. For sentences compared one by one to an "uncategorized" world, there is *literally nothing* to fit. There is no analog to "bare body" such as his sartorial analogy would require. Where the scheme-content dichotomy is not appealed to, the notion of true sentences "fitting the world" remains opaque and uninformative, for we have yet to be told exactly what depends on what [20].

But there is another sense of "fittingness" beside the piece-by-piece notion to

which one could accommodate Goldman's account. This would be Quine's view that the "unit of empirical significance is the whole of science" (Quine, 1961). What fits or fails to fit on this account, is the *theory* with which we are working. In this context, one defines truth in a straightforwardly deflationary way *à la* Tarski. This would free Goldman of the need to defend the doctrines that it is single sentences that fit, and that it is "experience" or "the world" that they are fitted to. We have, rather, for the theory fitting case truth-in-L, not truth *simpliciter*. If we add the further assumption that Goldman concedes, viz. that our linguistic categories are just ours, not the world's, then we can say that "fittingness" makes sense relative to a model for L. Experience provides evidence, but it is within a regimented language that we find truth.

This account of truth dovetails nicely with the account of epistemic evaluators previously discussed. For the analysis of evaluators was to be conceptual-linguistic, and so there is no apparent conflict in assimilating "correctly judged true" to truth-in-L on such an analysis. Yet epistemic evaluators, we noted, are evaluators only by virtue of evaluating their lists of epistemic virtues and vices against the findings of normative scientific epistemology. One simply uses science—both its procedures and its results—to evaluate one's beliefs and belief-forming processes. But then the reliabilism fully naturalized becomes epistemology radically naturalized.

Finally, Goldman attempts to rebut the criticism that veritism is useless inasmuch as it proposes a criterion for evaluation—truth—for which there is no agreed-upon method of application. The problem here is that Goldman depends on the distinction between "known (or believed) true" and "is true" to help distinguish veritism from its rivals, expertism and consensualism. But we have seen that that distinction is problematic, at least on Goldman's favored interpretation of "truth". The problem worsens, moreover, once one asks how, in practice, veritism is to be recognized from its erstwhile competitors:

Although I refrain from building any particular determination procedure into the content of veritism, it should not be inferred that I have no preferred group of determination procedures of my own....On the contrary, I presume that the best available set of procedures for determining veritistic properties of social practices are various procedures of the sundry empirical and mathematical sciences. It is precisely because such sciences are needed to *apply* the veritistic standards that I regard social epistemics as an alliance between philosophy and various scientific disciplines. (Goldman, 1994, p. 205)

On Goldman's own account, that is, "the best available set of procedures for determining veritistic properties are...the sundry empirical and mathematical science". But, this appeal to the sciences is to no avail with regard to salvaging the worth of some philosophical contribution. For, as already argued, whatever goes by the label 'normative scientific epistemology' does all the epistemological work. In short, Goldman's assertion that he has shown that "judgments about the epistemic properties of social practices do not *require* social practices" (Goldman, 1992,

p. 206) is not one his arguments sustain. Without a "point of cosmic exile" by which to define truth, any interesting distinction between veritism and its chief rivals disappears.

The problem now is this. Goldman has proposed as an innovation in epistemology, *inter alia*, the division of epistemic labor between primary, secondary, and tertiary categories, corresponding to natural (hard-wired) processes, learnable algorithms, and socially-sanctioned belief-forming methods. However, we are now in a position to ask what this "balkanization of epistemology" (Maffie, 1991) gains us. The distinction between the first category and the other two is meaningful on the assumption that the good-making features of reliable processes map onto physico-causal states. But while this mapping remains a metaphysical article of faith with Goldman, his attempt to imagine it as instantiated in a systematic and discernible way in individuals comes to naught. This is the lesson of our discussion. Whatever the metaphysical case may be about reliable processes, we have only normative scientific epistemology to go by, and this, as Goldman uncomfortably realizes, obviates the metaphysical distinction in practice.

The distinction between secondary and tertiary objects of evaluation, in turn, rests on an assumption that we can meaningfully discriminate between some sense in which algorithms and other rules are individual products, and the sense in which they are just sanctioned forms of collective processes such as the jury system [21]. Goldman's remarks on epistemic folkways, and the institutional nature of the science underwriting the goodness of epistemic practices, indicates that he has no resources by which to draw such a distinction. Indeed, by his own account, the distinction ought to be undrawable, for the only alternatives Goldman appears to acknowledge is that something is either a folkway or it is sanctioned by normative scientific epistemology (possibly both, of course). In either case, one cannot ascertain the epistemic status of an individual's beliefs without implicitly referencing that person's relationship to institutionally- or culturally-determined norms.

Liaisons encapsulates what analytic philosophy was and what it has become in the latter part of this century. The essays, in the skill, clarity, and rigor of their construction, prove correct Goldman's introductory remarks that he has been someone driven by the logic of the problems he studied to different perspectives. That these perspectives are not those that Goldman appreciates that his essays provide is of less moment than the fact his work offers important snapshots of where philosophy stands at this time.

Notes

- [1] While one does not know the date of composition of the essays, some of the later ones appear almost 25 years after the publication of the earliest of the collected pieces. For example, "A causal theory of knowing" first appears in 1967, while an important revision in Goldman's epistemological views, "Epistemic folkways and scientific epistemology" is first published in this volume. The *éminence grise* here is the Goldman who in 1986 wrote *Epistemology and cognition*. This Goldman reformulated the views expressed by the Goldman who wrote "A causal theory of knowing", "Discrimination and perceptual knowledge", and "What is justified belief?". Yet these earliest views are set together with others which Goldman collects in *Liaisons* which further modify the

position of *Epistemology and cognition*. So while it is no surprise that the various theoretical pieces are not jointly consistent, it is surprising that Goldman sometimes writes as if they were.

- [2] The 14 essays in *Liaisons* have fewer links among them than Goldman's "Introduction" might suggest. The whole is linked neither methodologically nor thematically. The core of the collection, at least from the standpoint of indicating how Goldman's own conception of epistemics has grown and evolved since the publication of *Epistemology and cognition*, consists in a half dozen essays (7–12). The first three essays in the book concern topics in philosophy of mind/psychology. While these are influential and interesting, especially essay 1, "Interpretation psychologized", they appear tangential to the growth and development of Goldman's reliabilist theory in epistemology, which is my primary concern. Three others essays (4, 5, and 6) collect in this volume Goldman's aforementioned early and much-discussed efforts in analytic epistemology. They represent, in this respect, a "no-liaison" view of epistemology. Whatever the independent interest of these pieces, however, they were essentially displaced by the reformulation Goldman gives epistemology in *Epistemology and cognition*. Finally, the last two essays included in this collection—"Towards a theory of social power" and "On the measurement of power"—both date (1972 and 1974, respectively) from a time before which Goldman took the social as part of the analysis, the titles notwithstanding. Whatever their interest now, both essays are exercises in "pure" conceptual analysis and represent, in this respect, a pre- or no-liaison view of their topics.
- [3] Detailed examinations of these positive and negative aspects of naturalism are to be found in Maffie (1990) and Kitcher (1992).
- [4] My discussion over the next several pages concerning Goldman's evolving views on the relation between philosophy and science are adapted from my essay "The epistemology of naturalized epistemology: Goldman, Quine, and the legitimation of epistemic norms".
- [5] Late in the process of drafting this essay, I discovered to my surprise that Quine uses the term 'methodological monism'. For Quine, methodological monism follows from his rejection of the analytic-synthetic distinction and his consequent acceptance of holism. The 'monism' signals that he recognizes no principled distinction in kind (e.g. empirical v. non-empirical; revisable v. non-revisable) among sentences in a language. The monism is methodological inasmuch as the means of evaluating statements are scientific (see Quine, 1981, pp. 70–71).
- [6] Maffie, in this regard, refers to a division between "limited" and "unlimited" naturalists (Maffie, 1990, p. 287ff.); Kitcher indicates this divide by distinguishing between "traditional" and "radical" naturalists (Kitcher, 1992, p. 74 ff., but especially p. 75). In each case, the former category contains those who believe that one can be both a naturalist and retain a prior conception of what is necessary for epistemic responsibility, i.e. a non-naturalistic specification of the norms of proper epistemic functioning. Both Maffie and Kitcher put Goldman in the former category for their respective pairs, and Quine in the latter.
- [7] For a defense of Quine's methodological monism, see "The epistemology of naturalized epistemology", unpublished.
- [8] Indeed, Goldman notes that he moves from his original position in response to criticism noted above by Maffie, that is, in an effort to make his approach more methodologically consistent. The "Naturalistic epistemology and reliabilism" essay, in fact, is explicit in its claim to full continuity, i.e. Maffie's "unlimited naturalism".
- [9] In, for example, "Foundations of social epistemics", Goldman argues not only that the notion of truth is the key component of epistemic appraisal, but also discusses the other standards of appraisal as appropriate standards because, he maintains, they are truth-linked (see Goldman, 1992, pp. 192–197).
- [10] Goldman considers it analytic, for all intents and purposes, that inquiry aims for true belief. "Very simply, truth linked standards are the standard implicit in the process of inquiry, and in the very notion of 'intellectual aims and assessments'. (Goldman, 1992, p. 201); "Getting true answers is, roughly speaking, what *defines* the aims of the intellect" (ibid.). The point is quite general for Goldman: "[T]he goal of truth is the common denominator of intellectual pursuits, whatever methods or practices are championed as the best means to this end" (ibid., p. 192).
- [11] There is, of course, an irony here in Goldman writing this way. For Quine's grades of modal

involvement has the deepest grade as the one he (Quine) finds the most philosophically offensive, since it invokes appeal to notions, e.g. essential properties, that Quine finds hopelessly unclear. Conversely, however, Goldman's third grade of normative involvement allows the most room for scientific/naturalistic elucidation, and so presumably would be the clearest by the sort of standard to which Quine holds.

- [12] Goldman, I recognize, uses the term 'studies' while I say of normative scientific epistemology that it 'identifies' reliable processes. But it would be impossible to study the psychology of evaluators to the exclusion of those of agents, as Goldman proposes, without the ability to empirically identify who among us has the epistemic "right stuff".
- [13] The confusion is compounded here inasmuch as the characterization of reliabilism Goldman offers in "Naturalistic epistemology and reliabilism", viz. "(R1) S's belief in p is justified IFF it is caused (or causally sustained) by a reliable cognitive process, or a history of reliable processes" (309) is one in which "justification supervenes on a natural property" (311). So (substantively construed) reliabilism (still) entails (meta-epistemological) supervenience.
- [14] Peter Markie (forthcoming) offers a somewhat different analysis to the same conclusion reached here, viz. that the agent-evaluator distinction cannot do the same work that "ontological" reliabilism was intended to do. I am greatly indebted to Markie's work for stimulating my own thinking here on Goldman.
- [15] Put in the language of traditional philosophy of science, epistemic folkways offers hypotheses which we may then test for reliability. But the "context of justification", as I understand Goldman, would be provided by normative scientific epistemology.
- [16] Presumably, in this regard, any folk habits that remain on the list of epistemic virtues remain there only because they survive scrutiny by a normative scientific epistemology. There is nothing, by virtue of being an epistemic folkway, that entitles them to be on any list of epistemically virtuous processes. So while a normative scientific epistemology may well retain some epistemic folkways, their reliability is certified by scientific, and not extra scientific considerations.
- [17] "The foundations of social epistemics" was published first in 1987. "Epistemic folkways and scientific epistemology" is first published in *Liaisons*. Whatever the actual date of composition of the latter essay, it clearly marks an important transition in Goldman's position. However, he seems unaware of the extent to which it raises unsettling issues for the lines of thought he inherits from the time of *Epistemology and cognition*.
- [18] The apt example cited by Goldman is the argument found in works such as Woolgar and Latour (1979).
- [19] "Perception is a causal transaction from the world to the perceiver, so perception does involve an encounter with the world....To be sure, the event at the terminus of the transaction does not resemble the event at the starting point. The terminus of perception is a perceptual representation....The initiating event does not have these properties" (Goldman, 1986, p. 154).
- [20] The *loci classici* of these criticisms are, of course, Sellars (1956) and Davidson (1974). Quine nicely summarizes the points that concern me here when he remarks "that it is idle to say that true sentences are sentences that fit the facts, or match the world: also pernicious, in creating an illusion of explanation....If empiricism is construed as a theory of truth, then what Davidson imputes to it as a third dogma is rightly imputed and rightly renounced. Empiricism as a theory of truth thereupon goes by the board..." (Quine, 1981, p. 39).
- [21] The distinction here is actually more complex than I portray. For Goldman, there are only individuals exercising epistemic competencies either alone or jointly under the constraints of some institutional or collective procedure. While I do not wish to reify the social (in this I agree with Goldman), I am more chary than he appear to be of taking competencies to be a purely individual matter.

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