Alvin I. Goldman's "Internalism Exposed"

I.   THE ARGUMENT FOR GENERIC INTERNALISM

1. J justifies S's belief that *p* iff J requires or permits S to believe that *p*.[1]
2. If J requires or permits S to believe that *p*, then J should be something that S can readily know, at *t*, to obtain or not to obtain. (Otherwise, it will be difficult for S to conform to her epistemic duty on a regular and consistent basis.)
3. Therefore, if J justifies S's belief that *p*, then J should be something that S can readily know, at *t*, to obtain or not to obtain. [This is the *knowability constraint on epistemic justifiers* (or KJ).]

II.   STRONG INTERNALISM

- KJ_{int}: The only facts that qualify as justifiers of an agent's believing *p* at time *t* are facts that the agent can readily know *by introspection*, at *t*, to obtain or not to obtain.

- Strong Internalism (or SI): Only facts concerning what conscious states an agent is in at time *t* are justifiers of the agent's beliefs at *t*.

III.   PROBLEMS WITH STRONG INTERNALISM

- THE PROBLEM OF STORED BELIEFS: Even if S has the occurrent belief that she was born on such-and-such a date, there need not be anything in her present conscious state that justifies that belief. Yet she *is* justified in believing that she was born on such-and-such a date.

- Feldman's Response: S's occurrent belief that she was born on such-and-such a date is *dispositionally* justified, for S has the disposition to generate conscious evidential states that would qualify as justifiers for the belief that she was born on such-and-such a date.

  1. This is too permissive. Even some perceptual beliefs can count as justified, for S might have the disposition to generate conscious evidential states that would qualify as justifiers for some such beliefs.

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[1] This is the guidance-deontological (GD) conception of justification: We want epistemic justification to guide us in determining what to believe.

2. Since S cannot readily know by introspection whether she has the disposition to generate certain conscious states, it seems odd that internalism would count these conscious states as justifiers.

IV. WEAK INTERNALISM

- KJ$_{int+ret}$: The only facts that qualify as justifiers of an agent's believing *p* at time *t* are facts that the agent can readily know, at *t*, to obtain or not to obtain, *by introspection and/or memory retrieval*.

- Weak Internalism (OR WI): Only facts concerning what conscious and/or stored mental states an agent is in at time *t* are justifiers of the agent's beliefs at *t*.

V. PROBLEMS WITH WEAK INTERNALISM

- THE PROBLEM OF CONCURRENT RETRIEVAL: According to internalists, "justification is conferred simultaneously with evidence possession" (p. 283). Moreover, certain internalist theories, e.g., holistic coherence theories, maintain that S's belief that *p* is justified only if it coheres with her entire corpus of beliefs. But S would need to concurrently retrieve her *entire belief corpus* in order to ascertain whether her belief coheres with it. Unfortunately, such concurrent retrieval is psychologically impossible.

- THE PROBLEM OF FORGOTTEN EVIDENCE: "Many justified beliefs are ones for which an agent once had adequate evidence that she subsequently forgot. At the time of epistemic appraisal, she no longer possesses adequate evidence that is retrievable from memory" (p. 280).

VI. ADDING CERTAIN COMPUTATIONAL OPERATIONS

- Perhaps internalism can overcome difficulties like those above by adding (to introspection and memory) some "computational operations or algorithms, procedures that would enable an agent to ascertain whether a targeted proposition *p* has appropriate logical or probabilistic relations to the contents of other belief states he is in" (p. 283). Goldman argues, however, that no such move will help internalism.

- THE PROBLEM OF THE DOXASTIC DECISION INTERVAL: According to internalists, "justification is conferred simultaneously with evidence possession" (p. 283). But (a) it takes time to compute certain logical or

probabilistic relations and (b) the mental states of epistemic agents change over time. Internalism must therefore allow for a doxastic decision interval that is large enough for the agent to make certain computations, but not so large as to allow for a change in mental state that would affect the epistemic status of her belief that *p*. These two conditions "may well be jointly unsatisfiable" (p. 284).

- THE AVAILABILITY PROBLEM: Suppose that, in addition to introspection and memory, internalists allow S to use a certain computational procedure, call it COMP, in coming to know whether potential justifiers obtain.[2] Goldman suggests, however, that no matter what COMP turns out to be, neither it nor its results is available to most epistemic agents.

VII. EPISTEMIC PRINCIPLES

- Internalism suggests (see Chisholm) that epistemic agents must formulate and recognize correct epistemic principles, principles that would let them know, of any belief, whether it is justified.

- Yet only a very few epistemic agents, if any at all, have formulated and recognized correct epistemic principles.

VIII. THE CORE DILEMMA

- The GD conception of epistemic justification gives rise only to the unqualified KJ constraint (if that). Yet that constraint seems compatible with *ex*ternalism, for it allows such things as perceptual states, which can serve as reliable indicators of the truth, to serve as justifiers. (Such states are as readily knowable, and perhaps even more readily knowable, than some of the things internalists take as justifiers.)

IX. EPISTEMOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- Internalists take epistemology to be a purely a priori enterprise. Yet, "[i]t is extremely difficult, using purely armchair methods, to dissect the microfeatures of memory experiences so as to identify telltale differences between trustworthy and questionable memories" for example (p. 290). In fact, Goldman argues, the prospects for a purely a priori, non-skeptical internalist epistemology are quite dim.

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[2] Goldman suggests that COMP might be the truth-table method for determining whether a set of statements (or beliefs) is logically consistent.