

# Knowledge and Reality, Lecture 06

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2022-09-19

Review

Why Internalism

Why Externalism

Srinivasan

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## Internalism

Rationality is a function of what's internal to the person.

- Two people who are internally alike are either both rational, or both irrational.

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## Externalism

Externalism is simply the denial of internalism.

- It says that sometimes internal duplicates differ in rationality.

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## Process Reliabilism

The most popular form of externalism these days is **process reliabilism**. This has two parts.

- In general, rational beliefs are those that are produced by reliable processes.
- But there is an exception; beliefs that fail some internalist test might be 'defeated', and not rational.

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Three Reasons

- Many reasons, we'll focus on three. The first two were mentioned last time.
1. Anti-luck.
  2. Cases.
  3. Evil Demons

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Evil Demon

- The evil demon usually comes into epistemology as part of an argument about scepticism.
- E.g., you don't know you're not being deceived by an evil demon, so you don't know that you have hands.
  - But here is gets used for a debate about rationality.

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Sympathy for the Devil (Victim)

- Imagine a person who seems, from the inside, to be just like an actually rational person.
- But in fact they are the victim of an evil demon, so their beliefs are all false.
  - Reliabilists say they are irrational, but they are intuitively rational.

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Question

What should reliabilists say about this case?

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Variant

- Imagine two evil demon victims.
- A is, from the inside, a paradigm of rationality.
  - B is, from the inside, a conspiracy theorist who leaps to conclusions, believes everything he's told, etc., etc.

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Question

Can reliabilists say something about the intuitive differences between A and B?

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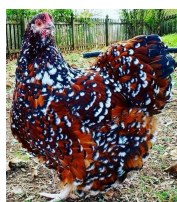
## Three Arguments

Again, there are many, but I'll just look at these three.

1. Speckled hen
2. Why care about rationality?
3. Involuntarism

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## Speckled Hen



How many visible white speckles?

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## Speckled Hen

- The right answer does just depend on your internal states.
- But it seems that any number you came up with by just guessing would not be a rational belief.
- So rationality requires more than internal states, it requires a reliable connection to the world.

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## Why Care?

Rationality should be something we care about.

- But if given a choice between being evidence-responsive, and being reliable, we should choose being reliable.
- And same for coherent versus reliable.

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## Why Care?

- Belief, in some sense, aims at the truth.
- Rationality means something like doing well in believing.
- So, being rational should mean something like doing well in getting to the truth.
- That means reliability.

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Why Care?

Are there hand-wavy moves on the previous slide that might not hold up to strict scrutiny? Yes!

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Voluntarism

- We evaluate the voluntary parts of human behavior by whether they make sense, and the involuntary parts by whether they work.
- Belief is involuntary.
- So we should evaluate it by how well it works.

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Somewhat Concessive

- This argument concedes that if belief were voluntary, internalism would be plausible/correct.
- But, it says, belief is involuntary.

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Evaluation

Whether someone has, say, a good or bad digestive system is not a strictly internal matter.

- Having a good digestive system just is being good at digesting common foods.
- And what the common foods are is external.
- The involuntarists say belief is the same.

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Two Objections

1. Belief really is voluntary.
2. Enough things connected to belief are voluntary that we can use something like internalist criteria.

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## Short Version

- In cases involving accurate beliefs under oppressive circumstances, reliability is enough for rationality.
- So internalism is false as applied to these rather important actual cases.

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## Three Cases

1. Instinctive correct belief.
2. Instinctive correct belief which persists despite counter-evidence.
3. False belief that matches lots of testimony.

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## Three Rival Theories

- Internalism.
- This is incompatible with all of the cases.

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## Three Rival Theories

- Process reliabilism, with the defeater condition.
- This is incompatible with the second case.

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## Three Rival Theories

- I don't know of anyone who has this view, but the third case seems designed to oppose a view that someone probably should have.
- Call it the generous view of rationality.

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## Three Rival Theories

Here's how the 'generous' view (my term) works. A belief is rational iff it is:

1. Formed by a reliable process; or
2. Properly based in the evidence.

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Three Rival Theories

No one has this view, but it seems interesting because it gets a lot of cases right, especially evil demon cases.

- But it gets the third of Srinivasan's cases wrong.

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Case Judgments

What do **you** think about the three cases?

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Argument Structure

What role do the cases play in Srinivasan's theory?

1. Trigger snap reactions that theory is judged against?
2. Make us reflect on what we want a theory of good belief for?

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Argument Structure

- My (idiosyncratic) view is that 1 isn't a very good reason to think about cases like these.
- But 2 could be a good reason.

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Cases and Principles

What general lessons about belief can we draw from reflection on these kinds of cases?

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Cues

On the next slide is one kind of argument I think can be drawn from these cases (not sure if it's a fair reading of the paper though).

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## Cues

1. Rational, justified belief is a matter of doing well in believing.
2. Doing well in believing, for creatures like us, involves picking up on subtle cues.
3. This is often something that is not available to consciousness, or available to reasoning.
4. So rationality isn't just about reasoning from conscious states.

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## Racists and Clairvoyants

To end, let's look at Srinivasan's argument that her examples generalise to promote a simple, or what she calls **radical** externalism.

- I found this part of the argument rather odd.

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## Argument by Analogy

1. Nour is justified in believing her host is racist.
2. Nour's case is just like Bonjour's case of Norman.
3. So Norman is justified in his clairvoyant beliefs.

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## Argument by Analogy

- Why should we believe premise 2 here?
- I know why an **internalist** should believe it, by stipulation the cases are pretty similar from the inside, but why should an **externalist** believe it?

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## Disanalogies

- The Nour example is pretty realistic, the Norman case is totally not.
- There is an explanation for why Nour could have this ability; there is no explanation for Norman.
- Nour's ability is widespread; Norman's is idiosyncratic.

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## Group Externalism

So here's a view that is untouched by Srinivasan's example, but agrees with Bonjour about Norman.

- A belief is justified iff it is produced by a process that is reliable, and widely shared among similar people.

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Group Externalism

This could obviously do with some more care about the details - I literally just made it up - but it feels more natural given the Marxist motivations to think about groups than individual reliability.

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For Next Time

Onto the most notorious part of recent epistemology: The Gettier Problem