

# The Legend of the Justified True Belief Analysis\*

Julien Dutant

Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 — penultimate draft

In the last few decades a certain picture of the history of epistemology has gained wide currency among epistemologists. The Legend, as I will call it, is summarised in the claim that:

Edmund Gettier's landmark paper successfully refuted the traditional analysis of knowledge. (Sosa et al., 2009, 189)

As my label indicates, I think that the Legend is false. Not that Edmund Gettier did not refute the Justified True Belief analysis of knowledge. He did. But the analysis was not the traditional one.

Even though the Legend figures in almost every epistemology handbook, I do not expect a strong resistance to the claim that it is false. The Legend is not widespread because it has been powerfully defended—it has hardly been defended *at all*—but because no better picture is available.<sup>1</sup> Such a picture is precisely what this paper intends to offer. Call it the New Story.

Like the Legend, the New Story is painted in broad strokes. It ignores a lot of historical detail and involves a significant amount of rational reconstruction. Yet I think it offers a recognisable portrait of the history of epistemology and provides an illuminating perspective on the present of the discipline.

---

\*Published as "The Legend of the Justified True Belief Analysis" in *Philosophical Perspectives* 29, 2015, pp. 95–145. DOI: 10.1111/phpe.12061

*Acknowledgements.* I would like to thank John Hawthorne, Pascal Engel, Kevin Mulligan, Timothy Williamson, Gail Fine, Keith Lehrer, Philip Blum, Alexander Bown, Arturs Logins, Davide Fassio, Anne Meylan, Fabrice Teroni, Fabrice Clément, Richard Glauser, Dominique Schulthess, Magali Roques, Patrick Greenough, David Owens, Clayton Littlejohn, David Papineau, Jasper Reid, Bill Brewer, Shaul Tor, Chris McHughes, David Owens, Maria-Rosa Antognazza, Christophe Grellard and audiences at Neuchâtel and King's College London for helpful discussions and references. This paper builds on chap. 2 of Dutant (2010). I am grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation for supporting this research (fellowships "Knowledge and Modality", PBGEP1-125927 and "Knowledge, Rationality and Choice", PAOOP1-145323).

<sup>1</sup>Thus Mark Kaplan's (1985, 352–353) criticisms and Ayers's (2003, 15) incidental remark that the Legend is "manifestly false" have largely been ignored. Antognazza (2015, 167–73) and Pasnau (2013) are the most extensive criticisms of the Legend to date. I discuss them in section 4.