

# Infallibilism

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## 1 The Idea

**Necessity** S knows that  $p$  only if S's belief that  $p$  is supported by infallible justification.

**Sufficiency** If S's belief that  $p$  is supported by infallible justification, then S knows that  $p$ .

Critics say that it's hard to see where such justification could come from. But if we *could* get it, it'd certainly do.

## 2 A Counterexample

Suppose that someone (infallibly) believes that X drank a bottle of poison and (infallibly) believes that anyone who drinks such poison will be dead in 24 hours. 24 hours later, she comes to believe that X is dead. Unbeknownst to the believer, however, X was run over by a bus before the poison took effect.

## 3 Is It Knowledge?

Suppose our believer reasons through the following:

- (1) Anyone who drinks the poison would die within 24 hours.
- (2) X drank the poison 24 hours ago.

Therefore

(3) The poison has killed X.

Therefore

(4) X is dead.

The presence of some important false belief seems to be what goes wrong in (at least some) Gettier cases. Probably not all of them. But some of them. So if we think that this makes them fail to be knowledge, we should think it does here. All we need is the following:

*Where S believes that p purely on inferential grounds and S's inference contains a false premise, S doesn't know that p.*

## 4 Various Responses

*How are we supposed to understand the infallible access in the situation?*

I don't know. But that's a question for an infallibilist, not for me.

*Our believer's grounds aren't infallible because they contain a falsehood.*

This doesn't prevent her grounds for her premises from guaranteeing the truth of her conclusion.

*Our believer does know that X is dead **just because her justification is infallible.***

This doesn't explain why inferring through a falsehood shouldn't be a problem here when it seems to be elsewhere. And this is an interesting conclusion in and of itself.