Sidgwick’s tripartite classification of moral beliefs
- Beliefs expressing one’s acceptance of some very general moral principle
- Beliefs expressing one’s evaluation of some act-type
- Beliefs expressing one’s evaluation of some act-token
  - Shafer-Landau calls these “verdictive moral beliefs”

How are verdictive moral beliefs justified?
- Inferentially?
  - According to the “standard model of ethical theory,” verdictive moral beliefs are justified in virtue of the inferential relations they bear to some very general moral principle(s) – e.g., the Categorical Imperative, Principle of Utility.
  - Problem: Inferential relations are often very unclear, and so, difficult to specify.
- Self-evident?
  - Maybe some moral beliefs are self-evident, but not verdictive moral beliefs.
  - Example: It was wrong for Joseph to lie to Thomas about his plans for Friday night.
    - Problem: I couldn’t ever hope to know such a thing without first knowing various facts about the particular circumstance, like Joseph’s intentions, the nature of his relation to Thomas, the significance of Friday night to Thomas, etc.
- What’s left?
  - Shafer-Landau thinks there’s a middle ground according to which verdictive moral beliefs are not self-evident, but nonetheless are non-inferentially justified.
    - Verdictive moral beliefs are justified as long as they are reliably formed.

Reliabilism
- Basic intuition: Justification of a belief ought to depend upon how the belief came about.
  - Example: I want to know how many students will enroll in PHIL 261.
    - Ask a random stranger for favorite number, and go with that
    - Put numbers 0-35 into a hat and draw a number.
    - Take average of past 10 years of enrollment in 200-level philosophy courses
    - Wait and check Gateway
  - Always a defeasible justification
  - So if some belief B is reliably formed, then it’s justified. But if I then encounter compelling evidence for the falsity of B, then B may be at least less justified.
- What is reliability?
  - Roughly, a belief-forming process is reliable if it produces true beliefs more often than it produces false beliefs.
  - Notice that reliabilism is compatible with many of our beliefs being formed inferentially, since some inferences will produce true beliefs more often than false beliefs.
    - Also theoretically compatible with psychological sentimentalism/moral sense theory.

Objections to (moral) reliabilism
- Does reliability require causation? (Example: What makes perception so reliable?)
  - Reliabilist reply: No. (Example: Omniscient Bob, among others …)
- Settling disagreements
  - Suppose two believers use reliable processes to arrive at conflicting beliefs
    - Recall Sinnott-Armstrong …
  - Reliabilist reply:
    - First, don’t confuse justification for truth.
    - Second, conflict resolution requires digging back in and (re-)applying reliable methods.
- General worries about epistemic externalism
  - Two claims made by (most) externalists:
    - The adequate grounds necessary to justify belief need not themselves be accessible to reflection, and so needn’t be thoughts or beliefs.
Beliefs can be justified without conscious attention to the support relations that obtain between the adequate grounds and the beliefs to be justified.

- Some just think this is false.
  - You can be justified in believing B even if: (i) the justificatory grounds for B are **utterly inaccessible**, and (ii) you’ve **paid no attention at all** to the relations between those grounds and your belief?

**Reliabilist replies:**
- Again, what about perception?
- Difference between *agent* justification and *demonstrative* justification

**The Generality Problem**
- Recall the case in which Omniscient Bob tells me that there’s a table before me, and I thereby come to believe that there’s a table before me.
  - We can actually describe this particular belief as having been produced by quite a number of different belief-forming processes – some more general than others, and some more epistemically secure than others.

**Possibilities:**
- Jim believes whatever he’s told.
- Jim believes whatever he’s told on Thursday, October 24.
- Jim believes whatever Bob tells him.
- Jim believes whatever omniscient people tell him.
- Jim believes whatever Omniscient Bob tells him on Thursday, October 24.

- Some of these processes sound really reliable; others, clearly, do not.
  - So now the question is: Which of these processes was the one by which Jim’s belief was formed?
    - If the first, then Jim is *not* justified.
    - If the fourth, then Jim *is* justified.
  - The basic problem: This generalizes to all instances of belief.

**Reliabilist replies:**
- If the objection is that *there is no single process* that produced a particular belief, then where’s the argument for that?
- If the objection is just that it’s really hard to specify *which* process produced a particular belief, then why think the believer is responsible for such a thing?
  - Again: agent vs. demonstrative justification

**Reliability not sufficient for justification**
- Example: Norman the clairvoyant

**Reliabilist replies:**
- Remember, it’s a defeasible justification. So maybe Norman less justified in second case than he is in the first.
- But in the first case, he *is* justified. He just may not know it.

### Identifying reliable processes of moral belief formation

**Takes moral *truth* for granted**
- Even takes some moral *knowledge* for granted

**Shafer-Landau won’t describe/defend a particular belief-forming process as reliable; rather, he’ll give us a kind of strategy for identifying reliable processes**
- The strategy:
  - First, identify moral exemplars.
  - Second, identify how they go about forming verdictive moral beliefs.
  - Third, go and do likewise.

**Shafer-Landau apparently thinks that the first step here is the controversial one, but you might think steps two and three are the real challenge.**
- Possible solution: Think about what Maggie Little would say here.
  - Take not of the sorts of things that exemplars *care about*, and then work on developing similar concerns for *those things.*