

Explanationist Evidentialism and Awareness

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Abstract: According to evidentialism, a belief is propositionally justified just in case it fits (is supported by) one's evidence. A fully developed evidentialist theory of justification will require an account of the evidential fit (support) relation. Some evidentialists have embraced an *explanationist* account of this relation. Some of these accounts, such as Kevin McCain's, place an *awareness* requirement on evidential fit. That is, they claim that a proposition, *p*, fits a subject's evidence, *e*, only if the subject is (potentially) aware of the explanatory connection between *p* and *e*. I argue by way of example that this version of explanationism fails. As a result, I suggest a friendly revision of explanationism that excludes an awareness condition. Finally, I field some objections to my version of explanationism.

According to evidentialism, a belief is propositionally justified just in case it fits (is supported by) one's evidence. A fully developed evidentialist theory of justification will require an account of the evidential fit (support) relation. Some evidentialists, such as Conee and Feldman (2008) and McCain (2013; 2014; 2015; 2017; 2018) have embraced an *explanationist* account of this relation. Some of these accounts, particularly McCain's, place an *awareness* requirement on evidential fit. That is, they claim that a proposition, *p*, fits a subject's evidence, *e*, only if the subject is (potentially) aware of the explanatory connection between *p* and *e*. I argue against this claim. First, I explicate recent explanationist accounts of fit offered by both Conee and Feldman (2008) and McCain (2014; 2015). Next, I argue that McCain's most recent must be refined in order to escape (slightly modified versions of) extant counterexamples in the literature.

Third, I argue by way of example that, nonetheless, this version of explanationism fails, since it mistakenly claims that one must be aware of the explanatory connection between one's evidence and a proposition in order for the latter to fit one's evidence. As a result, I suggest a friendly revision of explanationism that excludes an awareness condition. Finally, I field some objections to my version of explanationism.

1. Introduction

Before turning to an examination of Conee and Feldman's (2008) and McCain's (2014; 2015) explanationist proposals, it should be noted that the accounts discussed in this section, since they are offered in an evidentialist context, also double as accounts of *propositional justification*. The reason is that evidentialists say that propositional justification supervenes on evidential fit.¹ Actually, for the purpose of this discussion, we should simply assume that a proposition *p* fits evidence *e* just in case *e* propositionally justifies *p*. Hence, it should be clear that our focus here is propositional, rather than doxastic justification (I will consider the latter in section 4).

Conee and Feldman's (2008) account of the evidential fit relation is as follows:

Best Explanation (BE): *p* fits *S*'s evidence, *e*, at *t* iff *p* is part of the best explanation available to *S* at *t* for why *S* has *e* (63).²

Note that BE makes evidential fit depend on the best explanation *available* to a person. I will examine the availability condition shortly; however, let's set it aside for now.

At first glance, BE is plausible, for often the propositions that fit my evidence are, intuitively, part of the best explanation for why I have that evidence. For example, other things being equal, the proposition that *there is a green tree before me* fits my evidence if that evidence consists of my visual experience as of a green tree before me. And, other things being equal, it

¹ See Conee and Feldman (2008, p. 83) and McCain (2014, p. 4).

² BE is McCain's name for Conee and Feldman's (2008) position.

seems that part of the best explanation of my visual experience is that there is a green tree before me.

One problem for BE, however, is that it is too restrictive, that is, it does not account for many propositions that do, intuitively, fit my evidence (and, thus, which my evidence justifies). Consider an example from Goldman (2011, pp. 277-8):

ANIMALS³

I think there are two squirrels on my deck, and I think there are two birds. So I infer that there are (at least) four animals. Presumably, this arithmetic inference is justified. Is it a case of explanatory inference? Surely not. How does there being four animals explain there being two squirrels and two birds? It doesn't. Still, here is a justified belief that some epistemic principle must cover. But that principle, in turn, cannot be grounded in terms of best explanation.⁴

In response to such examples, McCain attempts to preserve an explanationist approach to fit by offering

Explanationist Fit (EF): p fits S's evidence, e, at t iff either p is part of the best explanation available to S at t for why S has e or p is available to S as a logical consequence of the best explanation available to S at t for why S has e (2014, p. 65).

As McCain (2014, p. 74) sees things, EF can handle ANIMALS if we assume that Goldman has a visual experience of two squirrels and two birds on his deck. ANIMALS is not a problem for EF because the proposition that *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* is part of the best available explanation of Goldman's visual experience as of two squirrels and two birds on

³ This is McCain's (2014, p. 64) name for the case.

⁴ For another example that purports to show that a proposition can be justified for S without being part of the best explanation of S's evidence, see Lehrer (1974, p. 166).

his deck. And an available logical consequence of the proposition that *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* is that *there are four animals on my deck*.

While EF can handle ANIMALS, it appears to have trouble accounting for the justification of our inductive beliefs about the future. Byerly (2013, p. 235) presents the following example:

GOLF

Suppose I'm on the golf course on a sunny, calm day. My putting stroke has been working for me most of the day, and I'm now on the sixteenth green. It's not a long putt – just six feet. I'm fairly confident. I rotate my shoulders, pulling the putter back, and then accelerate through the ball. It rolls toward the cup. The speed looks good. The line looks on. Yes, I believe it's going in!

It appears that the proposition *the golf ball will roll into the cup* is justified for Byerly. However, that the golf ball will roll into the cup clearly does not explain why Byerly has the evidence he does (e.g. “My putting stroke has been working for me most of the day,” “It's not a long put,” “The speed looks good. The line looks on”). Rather, the explanation of the evidence he has now “is a body of current and perhaps past propositions” (236). Thus, EF cannot account for the justification he has for *the golf ball will roll into the cup*.

In response, McCain (2014) argues that EF can account for Byerly's justification, for while the proposition justified by Byerly's evidence (*the golf ball will roll into the cup*) is not part of the best explanation available to him for why he has the evidence he does, it (or a similar proposition) is available to him as a logical consequence of the best explanation available to him for why he has the evidence he does. This is so if we adopt an understanding of *epistemic*

probability according to which a proposition, *p*, is probable for someone, *S*, just in case *S*'s evidence on balance supports *p*. McCain argues that

(1) *most golf balls rolling toward a cup in circumstances C* [the circumstances present in Byerly's case] *go into the cup*

and

(2) *the golf ball is rolling toward a cup in circumstances C*

are part of the best available explanation of Byerly's evidence. McCain suggests that (1) and (2) entail

(3) *the golf ball will probably roll into the cup.*⁵

Thus, it looks like EF can handle GOLF.

However, as Byerly and Martin (2015, p. 778) point out (and McCain (2015) acknowledges), (1) and (2) do not entail (3). They say, "propositions of the form <most *F*'s are *G*'s> and <*x* is an *F*> do not entail <probably *x* is a *G*>. The reason is that *x* might be a member of some other category, *H*, such that most members of *H* are not *G*s." Likewise, (1) and (2) don't logically entail (3).

Consequently, McCain (2015, p. 339) proposes

*Revised Explanationist Fit (REF)*⁶

A person, *S*, with evidence *e* at *t* is justified in believing *p* at *t* iff at *t* *S* has considered *p* and: either (i) *p* is part of the best explanation available to *S* at *t* for why *S* has *e*, or (ii) *p*

⁵ The propositions do not appear numbered in McCain's paper. I add them here for ease of exposition.

⁶ McCain refers to his view as "Ex Ej 2.0." I will use the simpler label "REF."

is available to S as an explanatory consequence of the best explanation available to S at t for why S has e.⁷

As McCain notes, a proposition, *p*, is an explanatory consequence of the best explanation available to S at *t* when “*p* would be better explained by the best explanation of S’s evidence available to S at *t* than $\sim p$ would. In other words, if *p* were true, the best available explanation of S’s evidence would better explain its truth than it would the truth of $\sim p$, if $\sim p$ were true” (2015, 339). Concerning Byerly’s case, part of the best explanation of his evidence is (1) and (2). While (1) and (2) do not logically entail (3), the latter proposition is an available explanatory consequence of (1) and (2).⁸ The reason is that (1) and (2) would explain *the golf ball will roll into the cup* better than they would explain *the golf ball will not roll into the cup*.⁹

It is now time to consider the question of what it means for an explanation to be *available*. As we’ll see, in order to understand the notion of availability, we need a basic understanding of *seemings*. Seemings are propositional mental states that have the “feel of truth, the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are” (Tollhurst 1998, p. 298-9). A seeming (as McCain (2014, p. 67) understands it) is a sui generis mental state that is distinct from such attitudes as beliefs and inclinations to believe.¹⁰ For example, it might seem to me that I had breakfast this morning, that there is a bridge up ahead, or that $2+2=4$.

⁷ See also his (2017) defense of the view from recent objections from Byerly and Martin (2016). While the locution “is justified in believing” in REF appears to concern doxastic justification, it is clear that McCain (2015, p. 334) intends REF to account for propositional, rather than doxastic justification.

⁸ For now, we can assume that the *golf ball will roll into the cup* is indeed *available* to Byerly as an explanatory consequence. It will be clear how this assumption can be vindicated when we examine McCain’s account of availability below.

⁹ One might wonder if Goldman’s case can be dealt with by REF, given that McCain has replaced the talk of logical entailment in EF with that of explanatory consequence. However, the case can be handled if we take *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* to be part of the best available explanation of my visual experience as of two squirrels and two birds on my deck. An explanatory consequence of *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* is that *there are four animals on my deck* (because *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* (clearly) better explains *there are four animals on my deck* than it would *there are not four animals on my deck*).

¹⁰ See, e.g., Tucker (2010, p. 530).

Keeping this in mind, McCain holds that p is available as part of the best explanation for why S has e just in case:

At t S has the concepts required to understand p and S is disposed to have a seeming that p is part of the best answer to the question “why does S have e ?” on the basis of reflection alone (2014, p. 67).

Having a seeming is not necessary for a proposition to be available to a subject: availability only requires having a *disposition* to have a seeming. McCain holds that a subject has this disposition by virtue of “having certain information as background evidence” (p. 67), which determines the character of the seeming. Concerning the first clause of McCain’s availability statement (having the concepts required to understand p), he holds that cognizers need not have the concepts of “evidence” or “explanation” in order for an explanation to be available to them. All a cognizer needs is to understand when something is an answer to a why-question. For example, when one has a visual experience of a red block, it is typically the case that one has a disposition on the basis of reflection alone to have a seeming that *<there is a red block* is part of the best answer to the question, “Why am I having this visual experience?”> And having this disposition does not require one to have concepts of evidence and explanation. Thus, this account of what an available explanation is appears to correctly classify *there is a red block* as available in this case and, therefore, as fitting my evidence (and, thus, as justified by my evidence).

What does it mean for a proposition to be *available as an explanatory consequence* of the best explanation for why S has e ? According to McCain (2018, p. 3044),

for p to be available as an explanatory consequence S must have a disposition on the basis of reflection alone to have a seeming that “ p would be better explained by the best explanation of S ’s evidence available to S at t than $\sim p$ would”—that is to say, S must

have a disposition on the basis of reflection alone to have a seeming that “if p were true, the best available explanation of S ’s evidence would better explain its truth than it would the truth of $\sim p$, if $\sim p$ were true.”

So, REF takes fit (and, therefore, justification) to turn on best *available* explanations and *available* explanatory consequences of best available explanations.

2. Explanationism Refined

REF faces two distinct types of challenges. First, leaving aside the availability condition, it appears that satisfying the explanatory constraints in either condition (i) or (ii) is not necessary for a proposition to be justified. Second, REF over-intellectualizes propositional justification by requiring an explanation to be available to a subject (or available as an explanatory consequence of the best available explanation of the subject’s evidence). I will examine this latter challenge in the next section. I will presently argue that the former challenge can be met by slightly modifying what type of evidence the “e” in REF refers to.

The explanatory problem for REF is that it does not seem to account for the justification of propositions in slightly modified versions of ANIMALS and GOLF, cases we’ll call ANIMALS* and GOLF*. In ANIMALS*, let us suppose that Goldman explicitly believes (on the basis of his visual experience) that *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck*. Now, according to evidentialism, all evidence is mental and one’s explicit (justified) beliefs count as part of one’s evidence (McCain 2014, pp. 10-11). Thus, the belief that *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* is part of Goldman’s evidence bearing on the proposition that *there are four animals on my deck*. And clearly the proposition that *there are four animals on my deck* fits this (in conjunction with the rest of his) evidence.

However, it doesn't appear that REF can allow this. Clause (i) of REF won't help, since *there are four animals on my deck* doesn't explain *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck*. What about clause (ii)? That *there are four animals on my deck* is not an available explanatory consequence of the best available explanation of Goldman's evidence, since *there are four animals on my deck* is explained directly by Goldman's evidence (*there are two birds and two squirrels*) rather than by the best explanation of that evidence. Thus, REF doesn't seem to have the resources to account for the fact that in ANIMALS* *there are four animals on my deck* fits Goldman's evidence.

A similar conclusion can be drawn using GOLF*, where we can suppose that Byerly comes to explicitly believe the following:

(1) *most golf balls rolling toward a cup in circumstances C [the circumstances present in Byerly's case] go into the cup*

(2) *the golf ball is rolling toward a cup in circumstances C.*

(1) and (2) are now part of Byerly's evidence bearing on

(3) *the golf ball will probably roll into the cup.*

And clearly (3) fits this evidence.

But, again, REF seemingly cannot allow for this. Again, clause (i) won't help, since (3) doesn't explain the conjunction of (1) and (2). Clause (ii) is not satisfied either. (3) is not an available explanatory consequence of the best available explanation of Byerly's evidence. (3) is explained directly by Byerly's evidence (1) and (2) rather than by the best explanation of his evidence. So, REF seems to be unable to countenance the fact that in GOLF* (3) fits Byerly's evidence.

To address this objection, we'll need to make an important stipulation about REF. That is, REF can be maintained, but the "e" mentioned therein needs to be understood as what Conee and Feldman (2008, pp. 87-88) term *ultimate* evidence, and should exclude *intermediate* evidence.¹¹ While McCain (2015) is not explicit on this point, he appears to intend the "e" in REF to include all evidence, rather than merely ultimate evidence. Ultimate evidence is a type of evidence that can justify propositions, but does not itself stand in need of justification. Intermediate evidence, on the other hand, can justify propositions, but must itself be justified in order to do so. The justification of an item of intermediate evidence must eventually trace back to an item of ultimate evidence. I'm not going to try to settle here what counts as ultimate evidence and what doesn't. Whatever the correct account of ultimate evidence is, it will arguably include such things as memory experiences, perceptual experiences, rational intuitions, introspective experiences, and perhaps testimonial experiences (though counting this latter item is controversial¹²). Further, the correct account will exclude such things as beliefs, instead classifying them as intermediate evidence. For example, my visual experience as of a green tree will qualify as ultimate evidence, but my belief that there is a green tree in front of me will not.

With this distinction in mind, we can amend REF to handle ANIMALS* and GOLF*:

Revised Explanationist Fit (REF*)*

A person, S, with ultimate evidence e at t is justified in believing p at t iff at t S has considered p and: either (i) p is part of the best explanation available to S at t for why S has e, or (ii) p is available to S as an explanatory consequence of the best explanation available to S at t for why S has e.

¹¹ McCain (2014, pp. 19-20) also recognizes this distinction.

¹² See Adler (2012).

This refinement of REF helps to blunt the objection from ANIMALS* because the fact that Goldman explicitly believes *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* does not change his ultimate evidence, namely, his visual experience of two squirrels and two birds on his deck. It remains the case that *there are two squirrels and two birds on my deck* is part of the best explanation of Goldman's visual experience, and that an explanatory consequence of the former is that *there are four animals on my deck*. Thus, clause (ii) of REF* implies that *there are four animals on my deck* fits Goldman's evidence. Similarly, GOLF* no longer poses a problem because the fact that Byerly explicitly believes (1) and (2) does not alter his ultimate evidence, for which (1) and (2) are part of the best explanation. An explanatory consequence of (1) and (2) is (3). So, clause (ii) of REF* implies that (3) fits Byerly's evidence.

3. REF, Availability, and Awareness

But REF* is mistaken because, I'll argue, a proposition need not be available, in McCain's sense, in order for it to fit one's evidence. The argument I will make for this claim by way of example involves subjects who don't believe a proposition despite overwhelming evidence. The cases are counterexamples to REF* because there is a strong intuition that the proposition in question is justified by (fits) the subject's evidence, even though it is not available to the subject.

Consider the following case:

MANUFACTURING PLANT

Smith has held a job at a manufacturing plant for a number of years. He enjoys his work, his colleagues, and the role the plant plays in the community. One morning he overhears a news story that corporate executives have decided to close the plant. Upon hearing the story, he dismisses it and wishfully believes that *corporate executives have not decided to close the plant* ($\sim p$). Later that day, Smith discovers that the company who owns the plant

has just made a formal announcement about their decision to close the plant this year.

Further, he comes to know that the company has made dozens of such announcements at other locations in the past and all have turned out to accurately represent the decisions of company executives. After receiving all of this information (call it *e*), Smith, due to his wishful thinking, is still disposed to have a seeming that *<corporate executives have not decided to close the plant (~p)>* is part of the best answer to the question: *Why e?>*. Thus, Smith is *not* disposed to have a seeming that *<corporate executives have decided to close the plant (p)>* is part of the best answer to the question: *Why e?>*.

REF* has the implausible implication that Smith's evidence does not justify the proposition that *corporate executives have decided to close the plant (p)*. The reason is that *p* is not part of the best explanation of *e available* to him. And *p* is not available to him in this way because Smith, due to wishful thinking, lacks the requisite dispositional seeming.

Can one plausibly insist that Smith's evidence doesn't justify *p*? No. Suppose that the following day (Day 2), after weighing the evidence more carefully, Smith finally is able to admit to himself that corporate executives have decided to close the plant. Presumably, such an attitude is supported by his evidence and Smith would correctly view his previous attitude (on Day 1) as one that was contrary to his evidence. But REF* does not allow for this commonsensical assessment and must instead say, implausibly, that Smith's evidence on Day 2 supports *p*, but does not on Day 1. Thus, REF* incorrectly holds that a proposition must be *available* as part of the best explanation of one's evidence or *available* as an explanatory consequence of the best available explanation of one's evidence in order for it to be justified by one's evidence.

Another way in which a subject might fail to have the relevant dispositional seeming is by believing a bad explanation due to fallacious reasoning. Consider the following case:

COIN TOSS

Jones has seen a coin flipped 5 times and each time it has landed heads, but has also been told by multiple coin experts that the coin is a fair one (call all of this evidence, e). Given this, the proposition that *the next flip is equally likely to land heads as it is to land tails* (p) is justified by her evidence. However, suppose she is under the grip of the gamblers fallacy and so instead thinks *the next flip is a lot more likely to land tails* (q). As a result, she does not have the (dispositional) seeming that $\langle p$ would be better explained by the best available explanation (that the coin is fair) of e than $\sim p$ would \rangle . Rather, she has a (dispositional) seeming that precludes having the above (dispositional) seeming, something like the seeming that $\langle q$ would be better explained by the best available explanation (that the coin is fair) of e than $\sim q$ would \rangle .

REF* implies that *the next flip is equally likely to land heads as it is to land tails* is not justified by (does not fit) Jones's evidence. But, intuitively, it is and Jones should believe it. We can see this even more clearly if we consider a version of the case in which Jones, by thinking more carefully about it comes to realize that she has fallen prey to the gamblers fallacy and, as a result, revises her belief from q to p . Presumably, p is supported by her evidence and Jones would correctly view her previous attitude (q) as one that was contrary to her evidence. But, again, REF* does not allow for this commonsensical assessment and must instead say, implausibly, that Jones's evidence now supports p , but didn't when she was influenced by the gambler's fallacy.

Given these problems for REF*, I propose a simple alteration:

*Revised Explanationist Fit** (REF**)*

A proposition, *p*, is justified for a person, *S*, with ultimate evidence *e* at *t* iff either (i) *p* is part of the best explanation for why *S* has *e* at *t*, or (ii) *p* is an explanatory consequence of the best explanation for why *S* has *e* at *t*.

REF** allows that *p* is justified for both Smith and Jones, even while they refused to believe it and even if they hadn't considered *p*.

4. Objections and Responses

4.1 Do Smith and Jones Have the Right Seeming-Dispositions?

One might object that Smith and Jones do in fact meet REF*'s requirements for justification, even before they come to realize their mistakes. That is, one might claim that Smith and Jones do in fact have the relevant seeming-dispositions. After all, Smith does form the relevant seeming on Day 2. This would show that he really does have the appropriate seeming-disposition on Day 1. Thus, REF* can acknowledge that *p* is justified for Smith and Jones.

The problem with this objection is that there is no plausible sense in which Smith and Jones have the relevant seeming-dispositions. This is especially so if the story stipulates that neither Smith nor Jones would have answered *p* if questioned about their evidence. For example, we can suppose that Smith's spouse has asked him throughout the week about the evidence (that seemingly indicates that corporate executives have decided to close the plant) and it has never seemed to Smith that *p* is part of the best answer to: Why *e*? We can suppose further that Smith has been reacting this way when friends, relatives, strangers, and further news reports have raised for him the question: Why *e*? In such a case, it is highly implausible to hold that Smith on Day 1 has the disposition to have a seeming on reflection alone that *p* is part of the best answer to: Why *e*? Thus, it's clear that on Day 1 *p* is not available to Smith as part of the best explanation of his evidence.

4.2 Does Linking Evidence Make a Justificatory Difference?

One might object that my case against REF* incorrectly assumes the agents' evidence remains the same after they realize their earlier mistakes. But clearly, Smith's evidence increases when he becomes aware of the explanatory connection between e and p. On Day 2 Smith acquires linking evidence (an awareness of the explanatory connection between p and e), and this evidence, the objection goes, makes a difference to whether or not p is justified for him.

Plausibly, linking evidence is a kind of ultimate evidence, since seemings are standardly thought to be able to transmit justification without needing justification themselves. But it would be unwise for someone like McCain to make this reply. Treating linking evidence as part of e in REF* leads to a vicious regress.

This idea drives one of Appley and Stoutenburg's (2017) arguments against explanationism. They argue that versions of explanationism that have an awareness requirement, like REF*, are faced with a vicious regress of (propositional) justification. The regress proceeds as follows. According to the proposed response, in order for p to be justified for me due to p's being part of the best explanation of my evidence, e, I need to be potentially aware (have a disposition to have a seeming) that 'p is part of the best explanation of e'. But then this awareness, since it is relevant to the justification of p, is now part of my evidence. Thus, my evidence has now grown. Let's call it e'. In order for e' to justify p, I need to be potentially aware that 'p is part of the best explanation of e''. But then this new instance of awareness is now part of my evidence for p, which has grown more still. We can call it e'''. In order for e''' to justify p, I'll need to be potentially aware that 'p is part of the best explanation of e'''''. And so on, ad infinitum. I can never achieve the awareness needed for my evidence to justify p. This means that REF* cannot include linking evidence.

The defender of REF* faces a dilemma, neither of whose horns are palatable. If she includes linking evidence (dispositions to have seemings) in her formulation of the view in order to claim that p is justified for Smith on Day 2 but not Day 1, then she faces a vicious regress. On the other hand, if she excludes linking evidence from her formulation of REF* in order to escape a vicious regress, she will have to concede that p is justified for Smith on both Day 1 and Day 2, despite Smith not having any linking evidence on Day 1.¹³

REF** does not require S to be (even potentially) aware of the explanatory connection between p and e in order for S's (ultimate, non-linking¹⁴) evidence to justify p.¹⁵ Consequently, it easily handles MANUFACTURING PLANT and COIN TOSS. In the former, p (*corporate executives have decided to close the plant*) is part of the best explanation of Smith's evidence. So, REF**'s clause (i) implies that p is justified for Smith. In the latter, the best explanation of Jones's evidence (the coin is fair) is part of the best explanation for p (*the next flip is equally likely to land heads as it is tails*). So, REF**'s clause (ii) implies that p is justified for Jones.

4.3 Does REF** Make Propositional Justification Too Easy?

One might object that REF**, unlike REF*, makes propositional justification too easy. An example from McCain (2014, p. 61) due to Conee and Feldman might be used to motivate this concern¹⁶:

LOGIC TA & STUDENT

¹³ For a response to this objection from Appley and Stoutenburg in defense of McCain's explanationism, see Lutz (forthcoming).

¹⁴ The "e" in REF** should be understood as ultimate, non-linking evidence. Henceforth, when I speak of "evidence" I mean to refer to ultimate, non-linking evidence, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁵ Appley and Stoutenburg argue that giving up the awareness condition is problematic for the explanationist. I address this concern in section 4.4 below.

¹⁶ McCain suggests (personal correspondence) that the following example can motivate what I've been calling an awareness requirement.

A logic TA and a beginning logic student are looking over a homework assignment. One question displays a sentence that they both know to express a truth and asks whether certain other sentences are true as well. The TA can easily tell through simple reflection that some other sentences express logical consequences of the original sentence and thus she is justified in believing they are true as well. The student is clueless (Conee and Feldman 2001, p 4).

According to McCain, intuitively the logical consequences fit the TA's evidence, but not the student's. One reason might be that only the TA, but not the student, is disposed to have the relevant seemings (or other awareness states). For example, suppose some of the relevant sentences are

(4) If P, then Q.

(5) \sim Q.

(6) \sim P.

According to this line of thought, the fact that the student doesn't see the connection between (4), (5), and (6) (specifically, that the latter follows from (or is best explained by) the former) implies that (6) is not justified for him.

I reject McCain's claim that (6) doesn't fit the student's evidence. It's more plausible to hold that despite his level best, the student fails to see that (6) fits his evidence. Intuitively, the student may be criticized for failing to realize the logical connection between (6) and (4) and (5). But McCain's position makes such criticism odd, since he holds that (6) is not propositionally justified by the student's evidence. How should we understand the student's epistemic shortcoming? In my view, the student may be criticized for failing to see that (6) fits his evidence.

4.4 Is there a Cost to Giving Up the Awareness Condition?

Another potential objection comes from Appley and Stoutenburg, who anticipate that explanationist evidentialists may opt to escape the vicious regress presented earlier by rejecting any awareness condition on evidential fit, and instead require only that a subject be aware of a certain portion of her evidence for *p*. However, they think such a move is problematic. They appeal to the following example from BonJour (1985, p. 41) to illustrate:

Norman, under certain conditions that usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power, or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day, Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence for or against this belief. In fact, the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power, under circumstances in which it is completely reliable.

According to Appley and Stoutenburg (2017, p. 3081), “Cases like Norman the clairvoyant put pressure on those who would reject a requirement that subjects possessing justification for a proposition must be aware (in some way) of the connection between their evidence and the proposition supported by that evidence.” Appley and Stoutenburg (2017, p. 3082, fn 28) worry that rejecting any awareness requirement will not “satisfy those who find the Norman intuition compelling.”

Unfortunately, Appley and Stoutenburg misconstrue BonJour’s example. BonJour explicitly states that Norman lacks evidence concerning a number of important propositions. Norman “possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind” for or against the general possibility of clairvoyance. BonJour adds that Norman believes the President is in New York even though “he

has no evidence for or against this belief.” Hence, the problem is not that he has evidence for the president’s being in New York and is unaware of how this evidence bears on his belief. Rather, Norman doesn’t have any evidence at all that the president is in New York.¹⁷ But if so, there is no relevant explanatory relation (between *e* and *p*) that Norman can be aware of in the first place.

But suppose we change the example and stipulate that Norman has evidence that clairvoyance is possible, that he has such a power, and that the president is in New York. We can also add that *the president is in New York* is part of the best explanation of this evidence. If we do this, however, the idea that Norman’s belief is unjustified is much less compelling and there seems to be little reason to think that, in addition to having evidence for which *the president is in New York* is part of the best explanation, Norman needs to fulfil a special sort of awareness requirement.

*4.5 Is REF** Compatible with Internalism?*

A related objection might be lodged against REF** on the grounds that it is not amenable to an internalist evidentialist approach to justification, since it doesn’t have an awareness requirement.¹⁸ On one influential account, internalism is distinguished from externalism by its embrace of the Subject’s Perspective Objection (SPO) in light of cases such as Norman above:

If the subject holding a belief isn’t aware of what that belief has going for it, then she isn’t aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or an arbitrary conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that it isn’t a justified belief (Bergmann 2006, p. 12).

¹⁷ Comesaña (2010, 582-3) responds similarly. For another discussion of BonJour’s case, see Conee and Feldman (1985, 27-30).

¹⁸ On some accounts of internalism some kind of awareness is an essential element of justification. See, e.g., Bergmann (2006). Interestingly, Bergmann (2006, p. 48-65) doesn’t classify Conee-and-Feldman-style evidentialism as a version of internalism.

According to Bergmann, the internalist says that in order for my belief to be justified, I have to be aware of “what that belief has going for it.” In an explanationist context, that may be understood as some kind of awareness of the explanatory connection between that believed proposition and my evidence. Does REF** run afoul of this core internalist commitment?

No. Accepting REF** does not preclude one from adopting the SPO. The reason is that the SPO states a requirement for the subject *holding* a given belief. That is, the SPO is a principle about doxastic, rather than propositional, justification. So, it is open to the proponent of REF** to claim that an internalist account of doxastic justification must accept the SPO, all the while denying that the awareness mentioned therein needs to be present for propositional justification. One way to do this would be to look to the basing relation. On the standard view,¹⁹ one’s belief is doxastically justified just in case it is propositionally justified and based on what propositionally justifies it. A proponent of REF** who wishes to maintain an internalist account of doxastic justification could claim that basing one’s belief on what propositionally justifies it involves the required sort of awareness. While a fully developed account of the basing relation is beyond the scope of this paper, we can at least sketch in broad outlines the type of account that a proponent of both REF** and the SPO could adopt.

Two of the most popular accounts of the basing relation are the *causal* model and *doxastic* model. Causal models claim that it is a necessary (and/or sufficient) condition for basing a belief that *p* on some evidence, *e*, that *e* causally sustain one’s belief that *p*. Doxastic models claim that it is a necessary (and/or sufficient) condition for basing a belief that *p* on some evidence, *e*, that one have a belief that *e supports p* (or some such). As is clear, doxastic models require for basing the sort of awareness we’ve been discussing above, awareness of the

¹⁹ For a challenge to the standard view, see Turri (2010).

connection between a proposition and one's evidence. So, a proponent of REF** could adopt a doxastic account of the basing relation and, thus, affirm that being doxastically justified in believing p requires some type of awareness of the explanatory connection between p and the evidence, e , which it explains. Thus, a defender of the REF** account of propositional justification can, in principle, retain their internalist credentials.

One problem with this approach, however, is that the simple doxastic account of basing above leads to a vicious regress. Presumably, a proponent of the account should say that the belief about e 's support of p is justified. But if so, this belief will need to have some basis, e_2 , and there will need to be another belief whose content concerns the relation between the previous belief and e_2 . And so on. A better approach would be to modify the doxastic account to instead require a seeming (or a disposition to have a seeming) that *e supports p*. Commonly understood, seemings are entities that can justify, but are not themselves capable of being un/justified. Thus, they are suitable regress-stoppers. In an explanationist context, we might add that the seeming should concern the explanatory relationship between p and e . Thus, a proponent of REF** could claim that basing one's belief that p on e requires one to have either a seeming that (i) *p is part of the best explanation for why e* or (ii) *the best explanation of e explains p better than it explains ~p*. Applying this account to the examples in the previous section, we could say that when Smith finally realizes he has been deluding himself and comes to believe that *corporate executives have decided to close the plant*, he has a seeming that the former proposition is part of the best explanation for why he had the evidence he did. Similarly, we can imagine that when Jones realizes she has used the gambler's fallacy and now comes to believe that *the next flip is equally likely to land heads as it is tails*, she has a seeming that the best explanation of her evidence (the coin is fair) explains the former proposition better than its negation. Thus, a proponent of REF**

could endorse the SPO, all the while rejecting an awareness requirement for propositional justification.

5. Conclusion

Explanationist evidentialists need not take propositional justification for p to require any sort of awareness of the explanatory connection between one's evidence and p . In fact, REF*'s overly demanding account of propositional justification actually makes it too easy for intuitively epistemically irrational subjects (e.g. Smith and Jones) to be beyond reproach epistemically. In light of REF*'s problem's, I proposed REF**, according to which a proposition, p , fits one's evidence, e , just in case p either is part of the best explanation of e or is an explanatory consequence of part of the best explanation of e . REF** is an important improvement over REF* because only the former can withstand the awareness-based objections presented above against REF*.

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