

Internalism, Factivity, and Sufficient Reason

Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa

January 4, 2017

Introduction

Reasons are important. They make some beliefs *reasonable*—that is to say, sometimes, one’s reasons make believing a certain content the rational thing to do. Reasons also play important roles in rationalising *actions*—what one ought to *do* depends in part on what reasons one has. Third, reasons are important in determining what *credences* one ought to have. Sometimes, for example, I should be .7 confident in the truth of some proposition; what reasons I have have a lot to do with why this is so. A case might well be made that reasons *wholly determine* rational beliefs, actions, and/or credences, but this is controversial. I won’t commit to such a supervenience claim here, but I will find it helpful at points to accept such a supervenience claim for the purpose of argument; as will emerge, this is a concessive assumption for the purpose of the main point I wish to defend.

A traditional idea ties both reasons and rationality to the internal realm. According to this idea, what reasons one has, and how one ought to respond, are a matter of how things are on the *inside*, or how things are with respect to one’s *consciously accessible states*. A purely external difference, according to this traditional idea, *couldn’t* make for a difference in one’s reasons, or in what one ought to think or do. Only features to which one has internal access can be relevant for these kinds of considerations.

This traditional picture is opposed by the idea that reasons are factive—reasons, according to this idea, have propositional contents, and their status as reasons depends on those contents’ being *true*. For example, Timothy Williamson’s famous suggestion that ‘E=K’—that one’s evidence comprises all and only that which one knows—is a kind of factive reasons stance, on the assumption that there is a suitable connection between evidence and reason.¹ According to Williamson, what evidence one has depends in part on contingencies of the external world. For example, whether my evidence includes the proposition that my dog is at home right now depends on whether she really is (as I think) at home, or whether instead some unusual circumstance has removed her without my knowledge.

Such factive approaches to reasons are controversial; it is not my project here to adjudicate their plausibility. (I am on the record as having endorsed factive, knowledge-based, approaches to reason, but I don’t propose to repeat those arguments here.²) My project instead is to consider a conditional question: if reasons *are* factive, what implications about rationality follow? It is often assumed in the literature that if reasons are factive, then *externalism about rationality* must be true—that purely external differences can make for

¹Williamson (2000, ch. 7)

²See e.g. Ichikawa (2012), Ichikawa (2013), and Ichikawa (2017).

a difference in what one ought to believe or do, or what credence one ought to have.³ I think this assumption is too quick. There is no quick and simple argument from externalism about reasons to externalism about rationality. On the contrary, there are reasonably strong prospects for a view combining factive reasons with more traditional internalist ideas about what one ought to do or think. Certainly such a view is worthy of articulation and exploration; such is my project here.

For concreteness, I'll focus in what follows on the knowledge-involving versions of the factivity of reasons theses.

1 A Bad Argument

I'll start with a bad argument against my conclusion. I haven't seen anyone explicitly defend exactly this argument in print, but I do suspect that a tacit attraction to something like it may explain why so many people have found it natural to suppose that if reasons are factive, externalism about rationality follows. It runs like this. I'll focus first on the version of the argument as applied to rationality of belief, then consider other adaptations.

The first premise of the bad argument is that the rationality of beliefs is determined by what reasons one has. This is in effect a kind of evidentialism, again on the assumption that reasons and evidence are suitably related. It is a supervenience claim: there can be no differences with respect to what it is rational to believe without a difference in what evidence one has.

Evidentialism of this sort is often associated with epistemic internalism,⁴ but its official statement is neutral on what determines what reasons one has. It says only that settling the reasons settles the facts about what it's rational to believe.⁵ Nuances of the best precise formulation of evidentialism aside, I think this kind of evidentialism is reasonably orthodox.⁶ I will grant it for the purpose of argument.

The second premise of the bad argument is the truism that the factivity of reasons implies that reasons do not supervene on the internal; two subjects may be intrinsic duplicates, yet differ with respect to what reasons they have.⁷ For example, given a knowledge approach to reasons, if I know that I will be home tonight, the fact that I will be home tonight is a reason that I have. For example, it's a reason to think I'll see my dog tonight. But a possible intrinsic duplicate of me may believe, but fail to know, that they'll be home tonight—because, for example, they are unluckier than I am in that their flight will be cancelled, delaying their homecoming until tomorrow. So when it comes to the hypothesis

³This is often, but not always, assumed. Lord (2010) argues carefully against it. My general outlook is, I think, similar to Lord's.

⁴See e.g. Feldman and Conee (1985), Dougherty (2011).

⁵An internalist version of evidentialism, holding that only intrinsic features of a subject can influence what reasons they have, will have a difficult time accommodating externalism about mental content—the orthodox idea that *what one believes* often depends on the external environment. My evidence justifies me in believing that Lisa is an epistemologist; if my possible intrinsic duplicate who is interacting with someone other than Lisa shares my evidence, a literal statement of the evidentialist premise will imply that they too are justified in believing that *Lisa* is an epistemologist, even though they have no beliefs about Lisa, since they have had no causal interaction with her. Perhaps an internalist evidentialist should characterise the official approach in terms of a kind of narrow content for beliefs, according to which my beliefs about Lisa and my twin's beliefs about twin-Lisa share the same 'content'. See e.g. (Conee and Feldman, 2004, p. 82).

⁶Though it has its detractors. See e.g. Littlejohn (2015).

⁷Again, content externalism makes the precise statement here a bit tricky—if my reasons involve Lisa and my intrinsic duplicate's don't, this suffices for the letter of the second premise on certain readings. We may prefer to say that externalism about reasons implies a stronger independence of reason from the internal than these content manoeuvres establishes. The examples in the main text should make this clear.

that they will see their dog tonight, they lack a reason I have, even though we are intrinsic duplicates.

From these two premises, the bad argument concludes that the factivity of reasons implies externalism about rational belief:

1. Rational belief supervenes on reasons.
2. If reasons are factive, then reasons do not supervene on the internal. Therefore,
3. If reasons are factive, then rational belief does not supervene on the internal.

The bad argument is straightforwardly fallacious; it conflates directions of the supervenience claims. Supervenience is transitive: if the A-facts supervene on the B-facts, and the B-facts supervene on the C-facts, then the A-facts supervene on the C-facts. But the failure of supervenience of B-facts on C-facts does *not* imply the corresponding failure of supervenience of A-facts on C-facts, even if A-facts supervene on B-facts. For example, the fallacy is transparent in this argument:

1. Social facts supervene on physical facts.
2. Physical facts do not supervene on biological facts. Therefore,
3. Social facts do not supervene on biological facts.

Maybe social facts fail to supervene on biological facts, but this argument certainly doesn't establish that this is so, even though both premises are very plausible. For all the premises show, it may be that the freedom of the physical from the biological—the possibility of changing physical facts without changing biological facts—is idle with respect to sociology. One can change the physical without changing the biological—one may arrange the atomic particles differently and nevertheless realise the same biological organisms—but doing so won't change the social, even if the social is fixed by the biological.

In the same way, it is entirely possible, consistent with both premises of the bad argument, that although purely external differences like whether a flight will be cancelled can make for a difference in what reasons one has, they can't make a difference to what it's rational to believe—even if what it's rational to believe is fixed by the reasons. Maybe the kinds of changes in reasons that the external can make aren't the kinds of things that could be or make for changes in rational belief.

Consider again my counterpart who wrongly thinks they'll be home tonight. I know I'll be home tonight, so I have that reason, but they don't. So I have a reason to think I'll see my dog tonight that my counterpart lacks. But of course it is entirely open that my counterpart has many *other* reasons to think they'll see their dog tonight. After all, although my counterpart is in a skeptical scenario of a mild sort, they nevertheless have quite a lot of knowledge in common with me. For example, they know as well as I do that the dog is at home, that they have a plane ticket, that the sign says the flight will begin boarding at 2:50, that flights almost always do something at least reasonably close to what they say they're going to do, etc. All of these amount to at least *some* reason for my counterpart to believe that they'll see their dog this evening. Indeed, given the strength of our shared evidence, and the fact that my counterpart has no particular reason to expect that things will go badly for them, in at least this case it seems overwhelmingly plausible to say that those reasons by themselves are enough to rationalise belief. Although I have more reasons

than my counterpart does to believe that I'll see my dog tonight, my counterpart has plenty. Their belief is rational too.

I think this diagnosis would have been largely uncontentious, ten years ago. Recent years, however, have seen novel defences of a radical kind of epistemic externalism. *Traditional* epistemic externalism, like that made famous in Goldman (1979), had it that facts about epistemic justification can depend on the external. For example, whether one's environment is such that one's belief-forming methods are reliable can make for a difference in whether one's belief is justified. Such externalism is for my purposes moderate in two dimensions. One is that the sense of justification articulated wasn't typically tied explicitly to *rationality*, and some externalists made a point of reserving the latter for a more internalist state.⁸ The other is that although it allowed for the external to affect justification, it could do so only in large-scale ways: if one is in a radically different environment—if one is a brain in a vat, for instance—the kinds of processes that we think lead to justified beliefs would fail to do so. But traditional externalism did not typically allow that *one-off* contingencies of the external world would make for a difference in justification. Given that my counterpart and I are in worlds in which our belief-forming tendencies are generally equally reliable, the fact that I'm lucky and he's unlucky in this particular instance wouldn't bear on our respective justification statuses.

Contemporary radical externalism, of the sort defended by Sutton (2007), Littlejohn (2014), and Williamson (2016), drops these restrictions on the external. The radical externalist holds that rationality itself—not just the epistemologist's stipulated notion of justification—depends on the external environment. And some radical externalists hold that small contingencies of the environment that go far beyond the question of whether one is generally reliable can make for a dramatic difference in rationality or justification. For example, some radical externalists like Sutton, Littlejohn, and Williamson, hold that only those beliefs that amount to knowledge can be justified or rational. My unlucky counterpart whose flight will be cancelled is unjustified in believing that they will see their dog tonight, even though I am justified in holding the corresponding belief.

Consequently, in making the case that my counterpart's belief may be rational, despite the fact that he lacks some of the evidence that I have, I am committed to rejecting radical externalism. This is a commitment I am happy to take on board.⁹ In my view, while there is some truth in the idea that belief aspires to knowledge, and that any belief that fails to be knowledge is in some sense defective, we nevertheless have strong reason to recognise a distinction between failures to know that are more straightforwardly attributable to the subject, and those that derive from the lack of cooperation from the broader world.

It's also worth pointing out, however, that in the context of the dialectical role of this paper, an assumption against radical externalists about rationality represents no argumentative shortcut. My target is those philosophers who think that the factivity of reasons has radical externalist implications. I wish to deny this—I want to show how one may accept factive reasons without radical externalism about rationality. Factive reasons theorists *needn't* be radical externalists; though if they wish to embrace radical externalism on other grounds, it's not my project today to dissuade them from doing so. (My tentative sense is that many of them have embraced radical externalism because they wrongly think factive reasons commits them to it; if so, I may help get them off the hook.) Others are wary of factive reasons for their perceived commitment to radical externalism. For them, I hope I

⁸See e.g. Goldman (1986, pp. 27, 60); or see Miracchi (2016) for a recent example of such an approach. But see Cohen (2016) against the distinction.

⁹Indeed, I committed to this already in Ichikawa (2014) and Ichikawa (2017).

can make factive reasons a little less scary.

2 The Appearances Challenge

In a recent paper¹⁰, Roger White has offered a more sophisticated argument from factive reasons to externalism about rationality. White's main concern is to argue *against* factive reasons views like E=K, but his strategy for doing so involves arguing that they commit one to externalism, and suggesting that the externalism in question is counterintuitive. I am inclined to agree that the externalist implications he suggests represent an intuitive cost, but I think White underestimates the resources the factive reasons theorist has to avoid them.

In one of his cases, White imagines a driver who is driving at 70 miles per hour. He considers two items the driver knows: (1) that the car is at 70 mph, and (2) that the speedometer reads 70. He makes what I take to be a strong case that the former knowledge is epistemically based in the latter; even if there's not a deliberate inferential step from an observation about a speedometer to a conclusion about the speed, the assessment of the speed is mediated through an assessment of the speedometer. I agree with this. Then White writes:

Now it seems to me that strongly parallel considerations apply with respect to the speedometer reading and its appearance. This time suppose I do explicitly judge that the needle points to 70, while nothing like 'It visually appears to me that the needle points to 70' consciously crosses my mind. But now suppose I more carefully recall seeing the speedometer and attend the character of my experience. On reflection I think: 'Actually, it appeared to be pointing to 60'. ... My response should simply be to conclude that the needle was actually at 60.¹¹

I find it difficult to wrap my head around White's case as stipulated. I have a perceptual belief, and then later do some retrospective introspection, and notice that actually, a moment ago, things seemed different to me than I had thought they seemed. Speaking for myself, I am not at all used to reflecting on experiences in this way. I can imagine a case like this:

I'm driving along, not paying too much attention to the speedometer, but glancing at it from time to time. I think I'm going 70. But then I think a little bit about my recent experiences, and realise that actually, when I glanced down at the speedometer a minute ago, it read 60. In response, I revise my beliefs about both my speedometer and my speed. I now conclude that my speedometer read 60, and that I was going 60.

White's case is different from this latter one in important ways—it focuses on the memory of the *perceptual experience*, rather than that of the speedometer reading itself. If on reflection I am confident that the speedometer read 60, then of course I should revise my belief that I was going 70. But this doesn't support the primacy of the experience as the reason—I revise on the basis of the speedometer, not the experience of it. The same is true if I remember that the speedometer read 60 *and* that it seemed to me as if the speedometer read 60. The fact that this pair of memories would motivate revision doesn't show that the

¹⁰ (White, 2014)

¹¹ (White, 2014, p. 304)

feeling is playing central roles, especially since we've just seen that the external fact alone, if known, is enough to explain the data.

So for White's case to do what it's supposed to do, he needs the memory of *how things seem* to be playing this difference-making role, *without* there being a corresponding memory about how things *were* externally. He needs to remember that his experience was as of it reading 60, without remembering that it *was* reading 60. I won't speak for White, but I myself almost never have such experiences of retrospective introspection. Sometimes I remember how things I'd observed were, and also remember what it was like to observe them; but I am puzzled by the idea of the latter without the former, when it comes to the perception of things like speedometers or hands.

In cases of very indirect knowledge, something like this phenomenon is familiar. Suppose I am not very good at recognising whether someone is flirting with me. I have an interaction with someone who is engaging in various social moves I'm not sure how to interpret; I leave that interaction uncertain as to whether they were flirting. Later, thinking back on my experience, I may remember some things about how they behaved—their posture, which conversational topics they made a point of following up on, etc.—but I might also usefully reflect on the experiences I had; they too may provide some (weak) evidence. For example, if I notice that I was feeling a bit frustrated with the conversation, and had the sense that they were distracted, this might be some reason to think they weren't flirting with me. This might especially be so if I have prior inductive knowledge that such feelings are a decent indicator of nonflirtation.

So cases like this are possible; but they seem not at all to be the norm for ordinary perception. In cases like the speedometer case, where what is at issue concerns something that I can literally see for myself, I'm much likelier to focus on what I saw, than on how I felt when I saw it. White's 'appearances challenge' fails.

3 Skepticism and Factive Reasons

White has also argued that if one embraces, as I've been suggesting, a view on which reasons are factive external states, but where a kind of internalism about rationality of beliefs is true, there is limited relevance of the factivity of reasons to skepticism. White writes:

Suppose ... Vat-Roger and I have different evidence but we are still rationally required to have the same degrees of belief. A consequence of this is that Evidence Externalism has little or no relevance to the sceptical challenge that interests me most. Suppose we take this line and hence claim that *if* I am justified in being confident that here's a hand, Vat-Roger is also. Never mind me then. How is it that poor Vat-Roger is justified in supposing that there's a hand before him? The sceptical challenge applies to him at least as much as to me. The Evidence Externalist will have to allow that somehow the mere appearance as of a hand is enough to render Vat-Roger justified in his belief, as he doesn't enjoy any extra evidence. ... [T]he same will apply to *me*. I will be justified simply by virtue of its appearing to me that there's a hand. Perhaps I do also enjoy direct perceptual awareness of the presence of the hand. That's all very nice but largely beside the point as far as the sceptical challenge goes ones it is conceded that Vat-Roger is justified if I am.

Notice that the same point holds if we suppose that while Vat-Roger and I are not justified to exactly the same degree we do not greatly differ in this respect.

It might be said, for instance, that while by virtue of a hand being visually present to me I am justified in being even more confident that here's a hand, Vat-Roger is at least *justified* in believing that there's a hand before him even if not to quite the same degree. But again, any response to the sceptical problem will have to allow that I am somehow justified in thinking there's a hand before me just by virtue of how things appear to me.¹²

White may be overstating his last claim here. I take it that White's view is that someone in the kind of position shared by both Roger and Vat-Roger, which includes an appearance as of a hand, will be justified in believing that there's a hand. Note that it does *not* follow that this is so *in virtue of* the appearance, in the sense that the appearance *metaphysically grounds* the normative epistemic facts, in either Roger or vat-Roger. No such strong claim is supported here.

A simple way to see this is to consider a possible approach to justification that has the first feature but not the second. Consider the proposal of Ichikawa (2014), according to which justification is a matter of 'potential knowledge'. On this view, a belief is justified just in case the believer is intrinsically identical to a possible person who's corresponding belief is knowledge. So since Roger knows that he has hands, and Vat-Roger is in the relevant respects intrinsically identical to Roger, Vat-Roger's belief is justified. Although in that paper I was not explicit about what *metaphysically grounds* facts about justification, I don't think it'd be particularly natural to interpret the view as holding that the appearances do so in each case. Vat-Roger is justified in virtue of having an internal state consistent with knowing. So justification facts depend on knowledge facts. (This is the sense in which the view is a knowledge-first approach to justification.)

Insofar as it is the knowledge facts that are fundamental, then, White's symmetry is undermined. What needs explaining is how it is that *Roger* (not Vat-Roger) *knows* (not justifiably believes) that he has hands. And Roger's factive perceptual state is a strong candidate for explaining *this* epistemic access.

I do wish to concede, however, that White is pointing to an important set of questions to which factive reasons are not the answer. In addition to the question of which propositions are held as reasons, there is also an important set of epistemic questions about how certain reasons could rationalise certain beliefs. (*Any* approach to reasons, including one that limits them to phenomenal experiences, must recognise this distinction.) Even if one thinks, for example, that one has factive perceptual states that give one direct knowledge about objects in the external world, we have many beliefs about matters outside of our direct perceptual environments, and many of these are supported by our more direct evidence. For example, I think that I and those sharing the same evidence I have face constraints as to what credences to have about the prospects of various individuals' becoming the next President of the United States. While more specific claims will be contested, I think it's uncontroversial, as I write in July 2016, that someone possessing the publicly available evidence cannot rationally have lower than a 0.2 credence that Hillary Clinton will be the next President. Our reasons make it more likely than that. (Most estimates by professionals mark her chances as between 50% and 70% today.) Even once we settle the questions about what our reasons *are*—facts about polls? facts about poll *reports*? facts about how things *seem* when we read poll reports?—there is a complicated epistemic story to tell about how it is that those reasons generate rational pressure for particular credences.

¹² (White, 2014, p. 309)

Similarly, I think the publicly available evidence makes it overwhelmingly unlikely that *I* will be the next President of the United States. Just why this is will be an involved story, in which the factivity of reasons will not play central roles. Even though I am legally eligible to be President, the publicly available evidence either entails or very strongly probabilifies the claim that I won't be any established political party's nominee. This fact stands in a strongly justifying relationship to the fact that I won't be the next President; a comprehensive epistemic story would explain why this is too.

So White is right that adopting factive reasons doesn't answer all the questions; this isn't a challenge to the factive reasons view because it was never supposed to do so. A view like E=K tells you what the reasons to believe *are*; it would require an additional substantive epistemic story to tell which beliefs they support and why.

4 Redundant Reasons

The failures of the Bad Argument, and of White's more sophisticated arguments, point to a possible general moral: the factivity of reasons implies that what reasons one has can depend on purely external factors, but this doesn't mean such factors can make for a difference in rational belief, because the difference in reasons may be *redundant*. To return to the example discussed in §2, my counterpart lacks the reason that they will be home this evening—but even without *that* reason, their *other* reasons nevertheless very plausibly support believing that they will see their dog this evening.

If one wishes to be an internalist about rational belief, one may extend this diagnosis to all purely external factors. For example, if one wishes to vindicate the 'new evil demon' intuition, according to which someone whose phenomenal experience is identical to mine, but who is the victim of a radical Cartesian skeptical scenario, is justified in holding the same beliefs I am, one can admit that I have reasons for belief that my deceived counterpart lacks, but argue that those reasons are redundant in the sense that even without them, our shared reasons are enough to support those beliefs.

Presumably, in the case of a seriously deceived individual—a bodiless soul given experiences by an evil demon, say, or a 'brain in a vat'—those shared reasons would concern the phenomenal, since that is what my deceived counterpart and I seem to have in common.¹³ So the way to run this line would be to argue that shared factive reasons concerning what experiences we have, or how things seem, would rationalise my deceived counterpart's beliefs. This isn't necessarily to say that such internal considerations are what rationalise *my* beliefs—we need to say that both beliefs are rational, but we don't need to say that they're rational *for the same reason*. But this line is at least suggestive of a central role for phenomenal evidence in the good case and the bad case alike.

I am not endorsing this view of perceptual justification—there may well be serious reasons to doubt it.¹⁴ Again, my aim is to demonstrate the degree to which the factivity of reasons is *consistent* with internalism. To the extent one wishes to argue that brains in vats have justified beliefs, views like E=K don't prevent one from doing so. But nothing in my framework *forces* one to adopt such a strong form of internalism.

If one is more sympathetic to directly external perceptual knowledge, one may deny the new evil demon intuition. There may still, however, be room for certain internalist intuitions, which one may wish to accommodate in the way I've been describing. One fairly simple way

¹³Or so says epistemic orthodoxy, at any rate. But see e.g. Simchen (2004) or Miracchi (forthcoming) for dissent.

¹⁴In previous work, I have argued that this is so. See e.g. Ichikawa (2017, ch. 3).

to do this would be to decline to describe the difference between myself and my envatted counterpart as a ‘purely external’ one. My own world-involving perceptual mental states, on this approach, would be considered as internal. After all, I am *myself* very different from any brain in a vat. It is, one might well think, not merely external factors that differ between myself and my envatted counterpart.

So suppose we set brains in vats aside as not relevantly similar to me. Direct perception of the external world is an important part of my ‘internal’ cognitive profile. There will still be important questions about to what degree factors that are ‘external’ in the corresponding narrower sense can influence the rationality of beliefs. The case of my counterpart who’s flight will be cancelled was an example; this factor is purely external in a stronger sense than that at issue for brains in vats. My own preference is to focus on this kind of case.

5 Reasons and Action

So far I have focused on examples of the rationality of beliefs, but the dialectic is identical for considerations of the rationality of particular actions within the realm of practical reasoning. An example of a factive approach to reasons for action is the knowledge norm for practical reasoning, according to which one’s reasons for action comprise all and only that which one knows.¹⁵ According to the knowledge view, what reasons one has can depend on external features of one’s environment. A fallacious argument would draw a simple line from this observation to externalism about rational action:

1. Rational action supervenes on reasons (at least once we hold fixed aims or desires).
2. If reasons are factive, then reasons do not supervene on the internal. Therefore,
3. If reasons are factive, then rational action does not supervene on the internal (even if we hold fixed aims or desires).

This argument is fallacious in exactly the same way as the parallel argument concerning belief, discussed in §2, is. Different bodies of reason may nevertheless commend the same action. That is to say, what reasons one has does not supervene on what actions are rational. So pairs of actors who differ with respect to what they know, even though they are internally alike, may, given a knowledge theory of reasons, have distinct bodies of reason that nevertheless rationalise the same actions.

So I am unconvinced by arguments in the literature against the knowledge norm of practical reasoning that conclude, from intuitive verdicts about who knows what and what would or wouldn’t be a rational action, that the knowledge norm is untenable. Consider for example this case from Jessica Brown:

I criticise my partner for failing to get potatoes on his way home. . . . [H]e calls in at the supermarket to get beer but fails to buy any potatoes, despite knowing that we were out. I criticise his action saying: ‘You should have got potatoes. You knew we were out’. It seems that this criticism would not be undermined if it turned out that he didn’t know we were out of potatoes but was in a Gettier situation in which he merely had the justified true belief that we were out.¹⁶

¹⁵See e.g. Hawthorne and Magidor (2016). For similar views put in slightly different terms, see Hyman (1999), Hawthorne and Stanley (2008), Fantl and McGrath (2009), or Weatherson (2012).

¹⁶(Brown, 2008, p. 173)

Brown's point seems to be that, since the partner doesn't *know* that they were out of potatoes, but nevertheless ought to have bought potatoes, it must be that knowledge is unnecessary for possession of a reason. We might further develop the case by considering it as part of a minimal pair along with a second version of Brown's partner who was not in a Gettier situation and so did know that they were out of potatoes; both versions of Brown's partner ought to buy potatoes, even though they differ in what they know.¹⁷

This argument is inconclusive. The two versions of Brown's partner differ in what they know—one knows that they're out of potatoes and the other doesn't—but they share lots of knowledge that would very plausibly rationalise buying potatoes (and rule out the proper failure to buy potatoes). For example, they both know that the shopping list says 'potatoes'. This is, intuitively, a perfectly good reason to buy potatoes in the kind of circumstances Brown is describing. The partner's normative failure is totally explicable in terms of his knowledge.

Something quite similar goes for cases in which one has knowledge, but one's epistemic position is nevertheless too weak to justify a particular action. Such cases are sometimes considered to demonstrate that knowledge isn't *sufficient* for possession of a reason, as in this case from Jennifer Lackey:

Rowena and Cesar have been colleagues in the English Department together for 7 years, and they have a great deal of respect for one another's evaluations of students in the program. While having lunch together last week, they were discussing the progress of various majors in the department. Just prior to dashing off to their respective classes, Cesar told Rowena that Mitchell Jones has excellent writing skills, which Rowena accepted despite the fact that she has had Mitchell in class for only a few weeks and has yet to see any of his writing herself. On the basis of Cesar's reliable and trustworthy testimony—combined with her background knowledge that the possession of excellent writing skills is sufficient for being a candidate for the departmental writing award—Rowena nominated Mitchell for this award in the English Department and thereby agreed to serve as an advocate of this nominee.¹⁸

Even if we grant to Lackey both central intuitions—that Rowena knows that Mitchell is an excellent writer, and that she was not appropriately placed to nominate him for the award—this needn't imply that knowledge doesn't suffice for reason possession; it may simply be that *this* reason—the fact that Mitchell is an excellent writer—isn't a strong enough reason to justify nominating him for the award. (Maybe to be properly placed to nominate someone for an award, only more specific reasons, for example those concerning what in virtue of which one is an excellent writer, would suffice.) Lackey's case shows that when one knows something, there may nevertheless be practically relevant deficiencies in one's epistemic position, but this doesn't imply that knowledge doesn't suffice for reason possession.¹⁹

I am admittedly working with a rough and intuitive notion of which reasons would or wouldn't support which actions; a substantive ethical theory linking reasons to appropriate

¹⁷For a similar case put to a similar use, see Gerken (2011, p. 535–6). Gerken compares someone who sees a lion and responds accordingly with someone in a corresponding Gettier situation who responds the same way. On the grounds that they are equally rational, Gerken denies that knowledge is required for reason possession.

¹⁸(Lackey, 2010, pp. 364–5). See also Jessica Brown's 'surgeon' case Brown (2008, p. 176).

¹⁹Lackey has told me in conversation that the more modest claim was in fact her central ambition in discussing this case.

actions would be required to make the cases more comprehensively. Nevertheless, I can see no reason to expect that, given such a substantive theory, we would have to deny that the fact that the list says ‘potatoes’ is under the circumstances a conclusive reason to buy potatoes, or we’d need to affirm that the fact that Mitchell is an excellent writer is a sufficient reason to nominate him for an award.²⁰

There are less obvious cases. Maria Alvarez has discussed the case of Othello, who, falsely believing that Desdemona has been unfaithful, strangles her.²¹ Alvarez, who embraces the factivity of reasons, suggests that Othello acts *for no reason*, falsely believing himself to have the reason that Desdemona has been unfaithful. A defender of the kind of internalism I have been articulating might wish to say instead that Othello *does* have reasons for which he performs his actions—they are those things that he does know, which made him *think* she was unfaithful. For example, Othello presumably knows that Iago told him that she’d been unfaithful, and that she was unable to produce her handkerchief when asked. Alvarez is reluctant to describe these facts as motivating reasons, in part because “it seems clear that Othello has no reason to kill Desdemona, and the reason he thinks he has—that she is unfaithful—is no reason at all.”²²

But I think we should tread carefully with the intuitions here. What is most clear is that Othello is wrong about important matters; it’s also overwhelmingly plausible that Othello acts wrongly. It is a theoretical interpretation, over and above anything obvious and intuitive, to suppose that he literally acts for *no* reason—that there is no *x* for which *x* is a reason Othello has to strangle his wife. Of course, an additional confounding factor in this example is that, even setting aside Othello’s factual error, his action makes sense only in the context of what is, from a contemporary feminist point of view, a deeply alien moral context. My own opinion—one which I expect (and certainly hope) most of my readers will share—is that even if Desdemona *had* been unfaithful, and even if Othello *knew* it, this would not have rationalised strangling his wife. If he did strangle his wife on the grounds that she was unfaithful, he would not have done what his total reasons supported. Even in this version of the case there might well be some temptation to say ‘he had no reason to strangle his wife’—maybe he should have tried talking to her instead. But the emphasis there is on the *to*—the proposition in question *is* among Othello’s total body of reason; it’s just not one that supports the action he performed. It is not always easy to separate questions about what is and isn’t a reason from questions about which reasons support which actions.²³

6 Reasons and Credence

So far I have demonstrated the resources available for a factive theorist about reasons—a knowledge theorist, for instance—who wishes to deny externalism about rational belief or action. There is no simple argument from E=K, or from the knowledge norm of practical reasoning, to externalism about what one ought to believe or what one ought to do. But I began the paper discussing three roles for reasons—reasons influence what you should believe, and what you should do, but they also influence what *credences* or *degrees of confidence* you ought to have. To return to an example from earlier in the paper, it is at least partially, and maybe entirely, in virtue of the reasons that I have that I ought today

²⁰Locke (2014) argues to the contrary, but see Ichikawa (2017, §5.9) for a response.

²¹Alvarez discusses this case in Alvarez (2016b) and Alvarez (2016a); I also heard her discuss it at the Vienna ‘Factive Turn’ workshop.

²²Alvarez (2016b, §2).

²³I develop this line of thought further in Ichikawa (2012) and Ichikawa (2017, ch. 5).

to be somewhere between .5 and .9 confident that Hillary Clinton will be elected President in 2016. If epistemic *permissivism* is true, then there is a range of epistemically appropriate degrees of confidence I may have, consistent with my evidence; *impermissivists* hold that the evidence settles a particular rational degree.²⁴ The issues about externalism I wish to discuss are independent of the permissivism/impermissivism question—what is at issue is whether purely external differences can themselves make for a difference in what credence or credences could be rational. If one is an impermissivist, the question is whether the one and only rational credence supervenes on the internal; if one is a permissivist, it’s whether the range in question does.

One again, we can articulate a simple bad argument for externalism about rational credence, given a knowledge approach to reasons. The impermissivist version runs thus:

1. Rational credence supervenes on reasons.
2. If reasons are factive, then reasons do not supervene on the internal. Therefore,
3. If reasons are factive, then rational credence does not supervene on the internal.

A permissivist version of the argument replaces talk of ‘rational credence’ with ‘range of rational credences’.

As in the cases of belief and action, this argument is straightforwardly invalid, and for exactly the same reason. Just because external factors can influence reasons, this doesn’t imply that they can do so in a way that will change the appropriate credences. Distinct bodies of reason can commend the same credences or range of credences. Nevertheless, in this case, and unlike in the cases of belief and action, there may be a stronger and simpler argument available. Certainly externalism about rational credence would follow from a knowledge theory of reasons and this assumption:

Strong Credence Evidentialism For any subject S with total evidence E and proposition p, S’s rational credence in p is equal to the evidential probability, for S, of p given E.

To see why Strong Credence Evidentialism would imply externalism about rational credence, consider internal duplicates who differ with respect to their knowledge, due only to purely external differences. For example, consider again myself and my unlucky counterpart whose flight will be cancelled. I know that I will be home tonight; so by E=K, this proposition is among my total evidence. So the probability on my evidence that I will be home tonight is 1. By Strong Credence Evidentialism, then, my rational degree of confidence that I will be home tonight is 1. By contrast, although I’ve been emphasising that my unlucky counterpart does have considerable evidence supporting the claim that they will be home tonight, it won’t be entailing evidence, so their evidential probability will be something (high but) less than 1.

The issue doesn’t only occur at the difference between maximal and non-maximal evidential probabilities. My evidential probability for the hypothesis that I will see my dog tonight is higher than my counterpart’s. Suppose for the sake of concreteness that it is certain for each of us that we’ll see the dog only if we’re home, and that, if we are home, we’re 0.9 likely to see the dog. It is 1.0 likely for me that I’ll be home, but only (say) 0.9

²⁴See e.g. Horowitz (2014) for discussion. Note that while she sometimes describes the question at issue as one about whether ‘our evidence completely determine[s] what we should believe?’, the details of Horowitz’s discussion are given in terms of credence, not belief.

likely for my counterpart. Then my evidential probability that I'll see the dog is 0.9, while my counterpart's is only 0.81. This, even though we differ only in purely external matters having to do with luck.

In the cases of rational belief and action, one can resist the argument for externalism by exploiting the loose connections between reasons and rational beliefs, and reasons and rational actions. Strong Credence Evidentialism amounts to a much tighter connection between reasons and rational credences. So in this case, there is a genuine conflict—if one adopts knowledge as reasons, either Strong Credence Evidentialism or internalism about rational credence is going to have to go. Still, I do not think this provides much reason to reject internalism about rational credence. I think there's good reason to reject Strong Credence Evidentialism anyway.

For one thing, on many standard ways of understanding credence, it's just implausible to begin with that one should have credence 1 in everything one knows. If you think, for instance, that when one has credence 1, one should be happy to take bets at arbitrarily long odds, it looks like we may have to say we hardly know anything.²⁵ So views like E=K fit oddly with Strong Credence Evidentialism even before we start thinking about the effects of the external on rational credence.

Notice also that Strong Credence Evidentialism runs into problems regardless of whether one adopts E=K. Suppose one restricts evidence in a more traditionally internalist way, such that one's phenomenal experiences, or the facts about them, comprise one's evidence. Then the facts about one's phenomenal experiences will have probability 1, conditional on one's evidence. But it's just not true in general that we should be arbitrarily confident about our phenomenal experiences; introspection is as fallible a skill as any other perpetual skill. Relatedly, it is a consequence of Strong Credence Evidentialism that one should have credence 1 in all logical truths, since they are entailed by any bodies of evidence, and that we should never be less confident of any hypothesis than we are of some hypothesis that entails it. These idealisations are psychologically implausible.

Since there are independent grounds on which to reject Strong Credence Evidentialism—both internally to the knowledge paradigm and more generally—the fact that it implies rational credence externalism, given factive reasons, is no reason to suppose a factive reasons theorist must adopt such an externalism. Here as elsewhere, the externalist implications of the knowledge theory of reasons are easily exaggerated.

7 Conclusion

I haven't made the case here, but I think that the twenty-first century focus on factive reasons represents a genuine and fruitful epistemological insight. But its defenders and detractors alike have been quick to ascribe it radical externalist consequences. Some, like Williamson, argue that factive reasons' radical consequences show us that we should radically rethink the relationship between normativity and the internal; others, like White, are moved to reject factive reasons to retain conservative internalist ideas about rationality. If the project of this paper is correct, then both stances are premature. One can, if one likes, be an externalist about *reasons* without accepting externalism about *reasonability*. So ques-

²⁵For ways of resisting this argument, involving revisionary ideas about knowledge, belief, and/or credence, see e.g. Clarke (2013), Stanley (2005), or Weatherson (2012).

tions about the desirability or plausibility of each view must be considered independently.²⁶

Bibliography

- Alvarez, Maria. 2016a. "Reasons for Action, Acting for Reasons, and Rationality." *Synthese* Online:1–18. 11
- . 2016b. "Reasons for Action: Justification, Motivation, Explanation." In Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasons-just-vs-expl/>, summer 2016 edition. 11
- Brown, Jessica. 2008. "Subject-Sensitive Invariantism and the Knowledge Norm for Practical Reasoning." *Noûs* 42:167–189. 9, 10
- Clarke, Roger. 2013. "Belief Is Credence One (In Context)." *Philosophers' Imprint* 13:1–18. 13
- Cohen, Stewart. 2016. "Theorizing about the Epistemic." *Inquiry* In Press. Draft online (2 June, 2016) from <http://www.stew-cohen.com/papers/>. 4
- Conee, Earl and Feldman, Richard. 2004. "Internalism Defended." In *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology*, 53–82. Oxford University Press. 2
- Dougherty, Trent. 2011. *Evidentialism and its Discontents*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2
- Fantl, Jeremy and McGrath, Matthew. 2009. *Knowledge in an Uncertain World*. Oxford University Press. 9
- Feldman, Richard and Conee, Earl. 1985. "Evidentialism." *Philosophical Studies* 48:15–34. 2
- Gerken, Mikkel. 2011. "Warrant and Action." *Synthese* 178:529–547. 10
- Goldman, Alvin I. 1979. "What is Justified Belief?" In G. S. Pappas (ed.), *Justification and Knowledge*, 1–25. Boston: D. Reidel. 4
- . 1986. *Epistemology and Cognition*. Harvard University Press. 4
- Hawthorne, John and Magidor, Ofra. 2016. "Reflections on Reasons." In Daniel Star (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*. Oxford University Press. In Press. Draft online (2 June, 2016) from <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~ball1646/publications.html>. 9
- Hawthorne, John and Stanley, Jason. 2008. "Knowledge and Action." *Journal of Philosophy* 105:571–590. 9

²⁶I presented versions of this paper at the Vienna 'Factive Turn in Epistemology' workshop in 2015 and a Northwestern University epistemology conference in 2016. Thanks to the audiences at both events for helpful discussion, and particularly to Nathan Weston, who provided comments at the latter. Thanks also to Maria Alvarez, Rachel Fraser, Daniel Fogal, Mikkel Gerken, Javier Gonzales de Prado Salas, Carrie Jenkins, Jennifer Lackey, Lauren Leydon-Hardy, Clayton Littlejohn, Aidan McGlynn, Robin McKenna, Veli Mitova, Baron Reed, Elliot Svensson, Timothy Williamson, and an anonymous referee for helpful discussions and comments.

- Horowitz, Sophie. 2014. "Immoderately Rational." *Philosophical Studies* 167:41–56. 12
- Hyman, John. 1999. "How Knowledge Works." *Philosophical Quarterly* 50:433–451. 9
- Ichikawa, Jonathan Jenkins. 2012. "Knowledge Norms and Acting Well." *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy* . 1, 11
- . 2013. "Basic Knowledge and Contextualist "E = K"." *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy* 2:282–292. 1
- . 2014. "Justification is Potential Knowledge." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 44:184–206. 4, 7
- . 2017. *Contextualising Knowledge: Epistemology and Semantics*. Oxford University Press. 1, 4, 8, 11
- Lackey, Jennifer. 2010. "Acting on Knowledge." *Philosophical Perspectives* 24:361–382. 10
- Littlejohn, Clayton. 2014. "The Unity of Reason." In Clayton Littlejohn and John Turri (eds.), *Epistemic Norms: New Essays on Action, Belief and Assertion*, 135–154. Oxford University Press. 4
- . 2015. "Stop Making Sense? On a Puzzle About Rationality." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92. 2
- Locke, Dustin. 2014. "Knowledge Norms and Assessing Them Well." *Thought: A Journal of Philosophy* 3:80–89. 11
- Lord, Errol. 2010. "Having Reasons and the Factoring Account." *Philosophical Studies* 149:283–296.
- Miracchi, Lisa. 2016. "Competent Perspectives and the New Evil Demon Problem." In *The New Evil Demon: New Essays on Knowledge, Justification and Rationality*. Oxford University Press. In Press. Draft online (2 June, 2016 from <http://miracchi.wix.com/lisamiracchi>). 4
- . forthcoming. "Perspectival Externalism Is the Antidote for Radical Skepticism." *Episteme* . 8
- Simchen, Ori. 2004. "On the impossibility of nonactual epistemic possibilities." *The Journal of Philosophy* . 8
- Stanley, Jason. 2005. *Knowledge and Practical Interests*. Oxford University Press. 13
- Sutton, Jonathan. 2007. *Without Justification*. The MIT Press. 4
- Weatherson, Brian. 2012. "Knowledge, Bets, and Interests." In Jessica Brown and Mikkel Gerken (eds.), *Knowledge Ascriptions*, 75–103. Oxford University Press. 9, 13
- White, Roger. 2014. "What is My Evidence that Here Is a Hand?" In Dylan Dodd and Elia Zardini (eds.), *Scepticism and Perceptual Justification*. Oxford University Press. 5, 7
- Williamson, Timothy. 2000. *Knowledge and its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0198250436 (alk. paper). 1

—. 2016. “Justifications, Excuses, and Sceptical Scenarios.” In Julien Dutant and Fabian Dorsch (eds.), *The New Evil Demon*. Oxford University Press. In Press. Draft online (2 June, 2016) from http://www.philosophy.ox.ac.uk/members/philosophy_panel/tim_williamson. 4