

Evidence and its Limits
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I. Introduction

Many epistemologists believe that there are important connections between epistemic reasons, epistemic justification, and evidence.¹ Justification and strong evidential support are supposed to go hand in hand.² The reasons that matter to justification and knowledge are all taken to be pieces of evidence. According to this way of thinking, reasons and evidence play a grounding role. Reasons and only reasons settle whether there is justification to believe what we do. (Or, if you prefer, evidence and only evidence settles whether there is justification to believe what we do.) When the right support is present, there is justification for our beliefs. When we believe for the right reasons and we're sensitive to their rational force, our beliefs are justifiably held. When this support is absent, nothing could justify our beliefs.

The standard view is mistaken about two things. It is mistaken about evidence. It is also mistaken about reasons. The standard view is comprised of four claims that capture the idea that possessed reasons or evidence grounds justification:

The Sufficiency Thesis: If your evidence provides strong enough support for p , you have justification to believe p because of this evidential support.

The Dependence Thesis: If you have justification to believe p , this is because your evidence provides strong enough support for p .³

The Identity Thesis: The reasons that determine whether you have justification to believe p just are pieces of evidence that you have in your possession.

The Foundedness Thesis: You justifiably believe p iff you believe p , your reasons for believing p are pieces of evidence that provide strong enough support for this belief, and you are properly sensitive to this.

Sufficiency and Dependence tell us that strong evidential support is present whenever propositional justification is present and that the presence of propositional

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² Conee and Feldman (2004, 2008) assume that there are such connections. So does McDowell (1998). Their positive picture of justification and its relation to knowledge differ radically, but their disagreements are predicated on a set of shared assumptions about these relations. Perhaps the most sophisticated discussion of the standard view is found in Sosa and Sylvan (forthcoming).

³ It is surprisingly difficult to find explicit arguments for the claim that justification requires supporting evidence. I will present an argument from McDowell later. Interested readers might also consult Lord (2013).

justification is always due to the presence of strong evidential support. Identity tells us that the reasons that determine whether there is justification to believe will always be pieces of evidence. Foundedness tells us something about the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification. Because of space constraints, the discussion will be concerned with the first three theses. Once we see why they're mistaken, we don't need a further argument against Foundedness.

The paper will proceed as follows. After a brief discussion of the ontology of reasons, I shall offer arguments against Sufficiency and Dependence. Once we see why they are mistaken, we will see why it is crucial to distinguish evidence from reasons. And once we do that, we can see that evidence and reasons have to play different roles in our normative theories.

2. Preliminary Questions about Reasons

The standard view is a view about the rational role of reasons and evidence. It tells us what they do (i.e., determine what's justified) and where they must be when something gets done (i.e., wherever something is justified), but it doesn't answer some important questions about reasons and evidence.⁴ It tells us nothing about the ontology of reasons. It tells us nothing about their possession.

In this paper, I assume that reasons of all kinds are facts or true propositions. Normative reasons, motivating reasons, and explanatory reasons differ because they play different explanatory roles, not because they belong to different ontological categories or because only some of them have to be true to be reasons.⁵ We can modify the statement of the standard view to capture this:

You have justification to believe p iff you have evidence *that consists of facts* that provides sufficiently strong support for believing p .

You justifiably believe p only if you believe p for reasons where your reasons for believing p *consists of facts* that provide sufficiently strong support for believing p .

Once we modify the view we need to decide on a view of possession. We know that your evidence box contains facts and nothing but facts, but we don't know how you have to be related to these facts for these facts to be included in your box of evidence. We will return to this below.

Some philosophers still reject this view about the ontology of reasons. They typically do so because they think that this gives us the wrong account of motivating reasons (i.e., a subject's reasons). They might concede that good reasons or normative reasons consist of facts. They might also concede that explanatory reasons consist of facts. Nevertheless, they insist that motivating reasons are different. Some will say that a subject's reasons for ϕ -ing will consist of the subject's mental states.⁶ Others say that they consist of the propositions that these subjects have in mind when they're in such states.⁷

⁴ Proponents of the view presumably do not think that just strong evidential support is sufficient for justification. Only sufficiently strong evidence will do. Let's not worry too much about what sufficiency is.

⁵ See Alvarez (2010).

⁶ See Conee and Feldman (2008), Gibbons (2013), McCain (2014), and Turri (2009).

⁷ See Comesana and McGrath (2014), Fantl and McGrath (2009) and Schroeder (2008).

There are simple and straightforward arguments for the view that all reasons have to be truths.⁸ The trouble with statism, as Dancy observed, is that it implies that it's impossible to V for a *good* reason.⁹ The good reasons to V are all facts or true propositions. Thus, if the reason for which you V is in some other ontological category (state of mind, event, substance, trope, etc.) then *it* could not be a good reason to V. The trouble with propositionalism is that the propositionalist wants to say that falsehoods can be motivating reasons. They seem to acknowledge that explanatory reasons cannot be falsehoods. Because of this, it's hard to see how their proposal about motivating reasons could be right. The sentences that we use to ascribe motivating reasons entail corresponding sentences that we use to ascribe explanatory reasons.¹⁰ If Agnes' reason for heading to the bar is that we're out of beer, the reason why she heads to the bar is that we're out of beer. Since the reason why a subject V's can only be *p* if *p* is true, the subject's reason for V-ing can only be *p* if *p* is true. To my knowledge, not a single proponent of propositionalism has addressed this very simple argument.¹¹ Moreover, it doesn't make good philosophical sense to deny this entailment. If you were to deny it, you would offer an account of motivating reasons according to which the truth about a subject's motivating reasons would *not* explain why she did what she did, thought what she thought, or felt what she felt. Your account of motivating reasons wouldn't be an account of anything at all. Because the propositionalists haven't addressed this argument, I don't have anything else to say about their view.¹²

The distinction between motivating and normative reasons is widely recognized but there's been less discussion of the distinction between motivating and explanatory reasons. As I've just said, all motivating reasons are explanatory reasons but explanatory reasons needn't be motivating (e.g., the fact that I'm bored might explain why I'm doodling without being my reason for doodling; the fact that I'm shy might explain why I'm staying home but it wouldn't be my reason for staying home; the fact that I'm gullible might explain why I believe things I read on the internet, but it wouldn't be my reason for believing what I read on the internet). Reasons of both kinds explain the agent's actions or attitudes, but motivating reasons do so in a distinctive way. They are supposed to capture the light in which the agent saw things

⁸ See Littlejohn (2012) for a discussion of the ontology of reasons.

⁹ See Dancy (1999).

¹⁰ A point stressed in Littlejohn (2012).

¹¹ When philosophers say that they will address the linguistic evidence for factualism, they tend not to address the linguistic evidence that ascriptions of motivating reasons entail correlative ascriptions or explanatory reasons (a crucial motivation for factualism in Littlejohn (2012) and tend not to address the evidence that ascriptions of motivating reasons entail correlative ascriptions of propositional knowledge (a crucial motivation for factualism in Unger (1975). See, for example, the discussions of Comesana and McGrath (2014) and Fantl (2015).

¹² I should say one thing about the motivation for the propositionalist view. My impression is that the view seems attractive because it seems that such a view is required to vindicate certain intuitions about cases while adhering to the standard view. If, as I shall argue, the standard view is mistaken, this should help to relieve some of the pressure that pushes people to adopt the propositionalist view.

and highlight the features of the agent's actions or attitudes that the agent took to make the actions or attitudes right, appropriate, or fitting.¹³

Because of this, there are three important features of motivating reasons worth highlighting. First, there are access requirements on motivating reasons that don't apply to the other kinds of reasons. You can overlook a normative reason if, say, you are attending to the wrong things or are forgetful. You cannot overlook your reasons for V-ing if they truly were your reasons for V-ing. You can also overlook an explanatory reason even if it is a reason that explains your actions. One reason why you might believe you have hands is that it looks to you that you do. One reason why you might believe that you have hands is that you are a BIV being manipulated in a certain way. If this fact is a fact, it doesn't capture your perspective on things, so it wouldn't be your reason for believing that you have hands.

Second, facts about motivating reasons reveal things about your values. If your reason for V-ing is that V-ing has such and such a feature (e.g., it settles a score, it is required by fairness, etc.), this reveals that this feature is on your list of pros. Similarly, if you believe *p* on the say so of another, it reveals something about your take on their reliability. Because normative reasons and explanatory reasons don't have access requirements, they can figure in explanations without providing much insight into your values or what you valued at the time (i.e., the kinds of costs you were willing to incur and the kinds of things that you see as worth pursuing, as making a kind of response fitting or appropriate, etc.). The fact that you are shy might explain why you stayed home, but it probably wouldn't be your reason for staying home. You probably didn't see the fact that you were shy as a pro that counted in favor of staying away. Because you are shy, you probably saw the presence of strangers as a reason to stay away.

Third, the possession of these reasons must be independent from the actions or attitudes that these reasons might then explain. If your reason for V-ing is that *p*, it must be that your possession of *p* as a reason is constitutively independent from whether you V. Having V'd, in other words, couldn't be among the conditions that must be met for *p* to be one of your reasons. This independence constraint is required so that *p* could be a potential basis for V-ing. If you are convinced to V or convinced that *q* where your reason for V-ing or believing that *q* is that *p*, the possession of this reason could not require V-ing or believing *q*. The possessed reason could not then explain the action or attitude. It couldn't if possession of it is both necessary for it to explain things and the possession of it turns on whether the thing it explains occurred or obtained.

So that we can refer back to these constraints, let's call these the *access*, *favoring*, and *independence constraints*. Because of these constraints, it's possible for there to be cases in which someone ϕ 's where there's nothing that's the subject's reason for V-ing where there are nevertheless normative reasons that speak in favor or against V-ing as well as explanatory reasons that explain why you ϕ 'd. Even when nothing satisfies the two constraints just mentioned there might be reasons why a subject V'd and there might also be good reasons for them to ϕ or refrain from V-ing. My favorite example is

¹³ Since McDowell (1978) this has been the standard gloss on the notion.

doodling.¹⁴ You might doodle and do so intentionally even though there's nothing that would be your reason for doing so. There might be reasons for you to stop (e.g., it is distracting, you are using up the last of the ink) and there might be reasons why you're doing it (e.g., you are bored) even if there's nothing that's your reason for doodling.

How does this relate to evidence? According to the standard view, your belief in p could only be justified if (a) you believe p for some reasons and (b) your reasons for believing p are sufficiently good for so believing. The issue, then, isn't whether you could have justified beliefs without there being any normative or explanatory reasons, but whether your belief could be justified even when you believe p without believing p for sufficiently good reasons (i.e., cases in which there's nothing that is your reason for believing p or cases in which the reason that is your reason for believing p is not a good one for believing p). I take it that your evidence for believing p should be understood in terms of motivating reasons (i.e., your reasons for believing p), not (mere) explanatory reasons and not (necessarily) normative reasons. Your reasons for believing p could be bad reasons for believing that, so satisfying the basing condition doesn't require that you've hit upon good reasons to believe what you do. Explanatory reasons might not be your reasons, so the presence of such reasons won't tell us what your evidence is. If, say, you are deceived by a demon and believe that you have hands, one reason why you believe you have hands is that you're deceived by a demon. That wouldn't be your reason for believing that you have hands, though, because (a) you wouldn't be aware of your deception and (b) you wouldn't take the fact that you were deceived to be any sort of indication that you have hands. In the next section, I shall argue that it's possible to justifiably believe things without believing things for good reasons. Once this argument is in place, the argument against the standard view will be straightforward.

3. The Basis Problems

The most promising way of developing the standard view draws on work done by McDowell and Pritchard.¹⁵ They think that reasons consist of facts or true propositions. They also offer us some helpful guidance in understanding what it takes for rational support to be sufficient to justify belief. On their view of perceptual knowledge, the standard cases of perceptual knowledge of the truth of p are cases in which your reason for believing p will be that you see that p . On McDowell's view of justified perceptual belief, it's not possible for our perceptual beliefs to be justified if

¹⁴ See Heuer (2014). The strongest argument against the idea that acting on false belief is a case of acting intentionally without acting for a reason is that it's not possible to act intentionally unless you act for a reason. The argument fails because there are cases of acting intentionally without acting for a reason. Heuer's case of doodling is one, but further examples include actions that express emotions and actions in which the agent acts from a mistaken belief.

¹⁵ McDowell's view has evolved in many ways since he published the papers in his (1998), but the core idea about the kind of support we need for justified belief has remained constant. Pritchard (2012) focuses primarily on perceptual knowledge and the kind of rational support required for it. He might think that this sort of support is not required for justified belief, but he defends a view that clashes with more familiar internalist views insofar as he thinks that a certain kind of reflectively accessible factive support is available in paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge. Most internalists think that it is never possible to have beliefs that receive this kind of support.

they don't constitute knowledge, so the account of justification just falls out of his account of knowledge.¹⁶ I don't know whether Pritchard agrees with McDowell on this point, but let's suppose for the time being that they do.

On this non-standard version of the standard view it is only possible to have perceptual knowledge and justified perceptual belief when you believe for reasons that are better than the reasons you could have in your evidence box in cases of systematic deception. You might wonder why we should think such high-grade reasons are required for justification or for knowledge. McDowell and Pritchard seem to be motivated by different concerns. McDowell's demand seems to be based on two ideas about knowledge and justification. First, he thinks that it's important to capture a certain kind of internalist insight:

The root idea is that one's epistemic standing ... cannot intelligibly be constituted, even in part, by matters blankly external to how it is with one subjectively. For how could such matters be other than beyond one's ken? And how could matters beyond one's ken make any difference to one's epistemic standing (1998: 390)?

If your reasons were the same as the reasons you'd have if you were systematically deceived, your reasons couldn't confer upon you the kind of epistemic benefit that McDowell thinks is required for knowledge. The crucial factors that distinguished knowing p from being ignorant about whether p would be beyond your ken and it's hard to see how such factors operating outside your view could be the crucial factor in giving you the epistemic benefits enjoyed by people 'in the know'. Second, he seems to think of knowledge as the standard against which we evaluate beliefs. If any belief fails to meet that standard, that belief might be excusably held, but by virtue of failing to meet that standard, it is one that shouldn't be held. If you think that you cannot justifiably believe p when you shouldn't believe p , you could see why someone like McDowell who sees knowledge as the norm of belief would think that justification and knowledge would be linked in this way.

Pritchard's motivation seems to be different. McDowell seems to be focused on the preconditions that have to be met for you to be properly positioned to come to know something. On McDowell's way of thinking of things, these conditions do not involve knowledge because they are the conditions that explain how it could be possible to come to know in the first place. Pritchard is also concerned with the upshot of having knowledge of some target proposition. If you know p , say, and know that q is true if p is, you should be able to rule out hypotheses in which q would be false. It's hard to see how you could knowingly do this if you didn't have evidence that 'favored' q over its negation, but it's also difficult to see how you could meet this favoring condition if, say, you'd have the same evidence as an internal duplicate deceived about p and q .¹⁷ Thus, it seems that it should only be possible to have the kinds of evidence you'd have if you knew p and had the abilities that came with that knowledge (e.g., the ability to knowingly rule out certain hypotheses) if you had better evidence than the deceived could have.

¹⁶ See McDowell (2002: 280).

¹⁷ See Pritchard (2012: 77). It is an interesting question whether the favoring condition can be spelled out in such a way that it avoids worries discussed in Brueckner (2005).

You might take exception with these claims about what's involved in sufficient evidential support, but we should at least acknowledge that when these authors develop the standard view their claim that sufficient evidence justifies belief isn't empty. (Compare the present suggestion to the suggestion that sufficient evidence is the evidence that justifies belief.) It does, however, put them under pressure to tell us how we acquire the evidence that makes non-inferential knowledge possible and to tell us what this evidence is. McDowell and Pritchard seem to think that perception makes this evidence available. Once available the things we see can serve as our reasons for our perceptual beliefs. Because of the quality of these reasons, our perceptual beliefs can constitute knowledge. Once you see, say, that there is an owl sitting on the branch outside of your window, you can believe that there is an owl there for the reason that you see that there is. The seeing is the contribution of perception, something that makes the reason available. It seems that the relevant reason satisfies the access, favoring, and independence constraint. If you have access to what you see and your seeing of it, the purported reason is accessible. If you think that the fact that you see that p settles the question whether p affirmatively, the purported reason seems to favor. If you think that seeing does not constitutively involve belief, you might think of perception as a way of acquiring reasons that you can then use to settle questions and therein come to believe or know something.

3.1 The Primary Basis Problem

The proposal on the table faces a potentially serious objection. It seems that the proposal satisfies the access, favoring, and independence constraints because it might seem that perception can provide a reason that could be a good basis for knowledge. Unfortunately, the fact that McDowell and Pritchard identify as the rational basis for believing p is the fact that you see that p .¹⁸ Arguably, seeing that p is really just a matter of knowing that p in a particular way.¹⁹ Contrary to what they seem to suggest, seeing that something is so is *not* a purely visual matter; rather, it is a partially epistemic matter, one that involves belief and knowledge as constituents. You cannot claim that the foundational reason that serves as the basis for believing p is the fact that you see that p is seeing that p is, *inter alia*, knowing and believing p . The possession of such a reason cannot explain how you came to believe p or what convinced you that p , for it is only in the state of conviction or belief that you see that p .

Pritchard calls this *the basis problem*. I'll call this the *primary basis problem*. Briefly stated, this problem is the problem of specifying the rational basis for the perceptual belief in a way that meets the constraints set out above about the possession of reasons and the kinds of support that these reasons would have to provide to justify belief. As he conceives of it, the problem arises because the rational basis has to be a possessed reason or piece of evidence and the candidate he identifies is the fact that you see that p . The problem with this basis is that it seems that seeing that p is nothing but knowing that p in a particular way. Thus, while possessed reasons that do justify belief are supposed to explain how you could be in a good position to know p , this fact cannot explain how you could be in a good position to know p because it just is the fact that you know p . This problem is much more general than Pritchard suggests. We all

¹⁸ See McDowell (1998) and Pritchard (2012).

¹⁹ See Dretske (1969), French (2012), and Ranalli (2014) for helpful discussions of the relationship between propositional seeing, vision, and knowledge.

face a similar problem, the problem of explaining how we could possess some evidence or reason that puts us in good standing without invoking this very standing to explain the possession of the evidence or reason.

Pritchard proposes a solution, which is to reject the following thesis:

The Entailment Thesis: seeing that p involves knowing that p in a visual way.

Pritchard and McDowell reject the Entailment Thesis because they think that you can see that p without believing that p is the case (2012: 26). If this were so, it would seem that the purported rational basis for believing p would indeed satisfy the three constraints mentioned above. As an added bonus, if anyone who sees that p is in a good position to know that p , the identified reason really would give us the kind of rational support required by any version of the standard view that recognizes knowledge as the norm of belief.

This isn't the only strategy for trying to solve this problem. Rather than target the Entailment Thesis, one might modify McDowell and Pritchard's proposal. Instead of saying that your reason for believing that there is an owl on the branch is a fact about facts being seen, you might instead propose that the fact made visually manifest is your reason for believing p .²⁰ In the case of non-inferential perceptual knowledge of p , your reason for believing p is simply that p (Littlejohn 2012: 125 and Schnee forthcoming). If we treat the seeing as the means of acquiring the reason, which we identify with the fact that p , we avoid the problem that we need to posit knowledge to account for the possibility of acquiring knowledge.

Unfortunately, neither strategy works. The trouble with rejecting the Entailment Thesis is that it is true. The trouble with modifying McDowell and Pritchard's proposal and characterizing our basis for believing p as the fact that we see (i.e., the fact that p) is that it seems to treat facts as among the things we see.²¹ Even if these worries are misplaced, these proposals suffer from a common defect, one that suggests that the primary basis problem is really a problem for the standard view and not just the way that these authors have tried to develop it. The problem has to do with the kind of relation we have to bear to a reason for it to be the reason in light of which we believe, feel, or do something.

Let's suppose for the sake of discussion that experience is like belief in having a kind of representational content. If you like this way of thinking about experience, you might think that one of the main epistemically significant differences between belief and experience is that when you believe p , you are committed to the truth of p in such a way that you would be mistaken if p were false. The same doesn't hold for experience. It might seem to Lady MacBeth that there is a spot on her hand because of the kind of visual experiences she's having, but if she suspects that she is hallucinating again she wouldn't be right about her hand if there was a spot there and she wouldn't be wrong about her hand if there was no spot there. An experience might 'invite' you to believe, but it doesn't compel or involve belief. Because of this difference, I don't think that you could acquire p as evidence by means of an experience that was not accompanied by a further belief that p is true.

²⁰ This view is sometimes ascribed to McDowell, but not by McDowell. See his (2006).

²¹ For arguments against the idea that facts are among the things we view or perceive, see Brewer (2011) and Travis (2013).

To possess a reason or piece of evidence, you have to be in a state where you could believe, feel, or do something for the reason that p without first having to change your attitude towards p . If your 'attitude' towards p consists of experience but not belief, you do not take it that p is true. You aren't so minded that you'd be right about p if p and wrong about p if p were false. What would it be to believe, feel, or do something for the reason that p ? McDowell (1978) gives us an answer. Your reasons for V-ing are, as he puts it, the light in which you took there to be something good, favorable, appropriate, or sensible about V-ing. If you don't believe p , whether it's because you're agnostic about whether p or because you believe $\sim p$, p couldn't be your answer to the question, 'What's good about V-ing?' As such, it couldn't be the light in which you V. As such, it couldn't be your reason for anything at all.

If we're working with the standard account of motivating reasons that we get from McDowell, the argument just sketched shows that the possession of reasons requires belief in the proposition that constitutes the reason:

Doxastic Requirement: You cannot V for the reason that p unless you believe p .

With this requirement in place, we can show that the primary basis problem is actually a problem for the standard view in all its forms.²² The standard view has to incorporate the Doxastic Requirement, but this gives rise to a regress problem:

The Regress Argument

1. To know p or justifiably believe p , you have to have a reason to believe p where this reason is your reason for believing p , a reason that's provided by a representational state of mind that's independent from the belief that p .
2. This representational state either has p as its content or something distinct from p , p' .
3. If the former, the state would (under suitable conditions) enable the subject to believe things such as p for the reason that p .
4. The subject's reason for believing p cannot be p .
5. Thus, if there is a representational state that provides you with a reason that enables you to know p perceptually, it must have a content that's distinct from p .
6. Suppose that the representational state's content is some distinct content, p' and that (under suitable conditions), this representational state would enable the subject to believe things for the reason that p' .
7. To know p perceptually as a result of believing p for the reason that p' , you have to believe p' .
8. To know p' , you have to have a reason to believe p' where this reason is your reason for believing p' , a reason that's

²² Few proponents of the standard view will not recognize this problem as a problem for their view. They might think that false propositions or states of mind can be reasons we possess simply by being in certain mental states or having propositional attitudes. I don't think that you solve the problem by adopting a false view about the ontology of reasons.

provided by a representational state of mind that's independent from the belief that p '.

Once we get to (8), we have the start of a vicious regress. The argument makes knowing p conditional on knowing p' on the basis of p'' and it is clear that p'' has to be distinct from both p and p' .²³ Proponents of the standard view did not see that such a regress would arise because they mistakenly thought that there were presentational states of mind distinct from belief that would enable you to believe, feel, or do things for the reason that is the content of that state of mind. Once the doxastic requirement is in place, though, we can see why (4) and (7) must be true. It seemed that experience or seeing could help you believe things for reasons that consist of facts, but this overlooks the fact that the commitment that is distinctive of belief is an essential part of taking something to favor an option. Without the doxastic requirement, we lose the favoring constraint on motivating reasons. With that in place, the independence constraint rules out (4) and thus creates the need for further reasons to believe p . The need cannot be met, however, so a vicious regress ensues.

There is a simple solution to the primary basis problem. We should reject the idea that non-inferential beliefs constitute knowledge by virtue of being supported by reasons.²⁴ If the proponents of the standard view want to meet this worry, they'll need to do two things. First, they'll need to show that there's something wrong with the argument for the Doxastic Requirement. Unfortunately, we have just seen that there is a simple but overlooked argument for the Doxastic Requirement from the standard gloss on what motivating reasons are. Second, they'll need to offer some account of the possession of evidence on which it's possible to possess p as a piece of evidence or as a potential motivating reason on which it's possible to possess it *and* be rationally guided by it in believing, feeling, or doing things where the guidance does not require the belief that p is true.

It's not just perceptual belief that's a problem for the standard view, mind you. Once we see the motivation for the Doxastic Requirement, we can see that all cases of non-inferential belief cause trouble for the standard view. The standard view tells us that if you justifiably believe p , there's some evidence that supports this belief and this evidence serves as your reason for believing what you do. This evidence either consists of some representational state of mind or is provided by some representational state of mind that has some p -related content. In the case of the belief that there's some pink patch before me (a patch on the back of my hand, say), there are three players to consider:

- (a) The belief that there's a pink patch before me;
- (b) The representational state that has an appropriate content related to the content of this belief (which either is the evidence or provides the content as evidence and makes true claims like 'It seems to me that there is a pink patch before me).
- (c) The hand, its color, its relation to me, etc.

²³ It is clear to people who see foundationalism as the best response to the traditional regress problem.

²⁴ See Echeverri (2013), McGinn (2012), and Millar (2011) for arguments that perceptual belief might not be a case in which you form a belief for a reason.

My claim is that the second player is neither a piece of evidence nor something that provides evidence that would be in your possession in the absence of a belief, but the standard view tells us that we have to think of the items in (b) as our reasons or our evidence. If there really is an irresistible pressure to apply this to the case of perception because of some general point about justification and the rational role of reasons and/or evidence, what should we say about cases of self-knowledge?

Let's suppose we apply this picture to the case of knowledge of our own pains.²⁵ You believe that you're in pain. You feel the throbbing pain in your heel. What plays the role of evidence here? I can't think of a representational state that's suitable. I can't see how to get the three players on the stage to apply the model that the standard view tells us is compulsory for all cases of knowledge or justified belief. The evidence is not the belief. It's not the belief because there's supposed to be something independent from the belief that provides the evidence. It's not the pain because even if you thought that pain represented something, the pain belongs in (c) in this case, not (b). Moreover, I don't think anybody thinks that there's some representation that represents some sensation as being *a pain* that's a representation that's distinct from belief. (Remember that a sensation is a pain only when it is sufficiently intense. There will be a range of levels of intensity here and the possibility of getting things wrong when you judge that a sensation is painful when it isn't sufficiently intense. If the relevant sensation weren't quite intense enough to be a pain, we wouldn't say that some subject suffered from a kind of illusion where some representational state that we've never named presents the sensation as having properties it doesn't in the way that, say, experience is said to present external objects as having properties it doesn't when we're looking at the Muller-Lyer lines.) So, is the knowledge that you are in pain a case of belief in which the belief is rational but isn't based on anything that we'd call evidence for the proposition that you're in pain? It looks that way.

The easiest way to solve the primary basis problem is to dissolve it. The problem only arises on the mistaken assumption that every case of justified belief is a case of believing something for a reason. In the non-inferential cases, there's nothing that could have been your reason for believing what you do.

²⁵ Other interesting and important test cases are cases of knowledge of your own intention and action and knowledge of the position of your own limbs. See Anscombe's (1962) and (2000) discussions of the possibility of knowledge without clues. Some writers like Audi (2001) could try to do justice to Anscombe's observations by suggesting that it is possible to know *p* without believing *p* for any sort of reason while insisting that it is not possible to justifiably believe *p* without the support of such reasons. My main concern with this strategy is precisely that it suggests that the relevant cases are cases of knowledge in which the subject's belief is not justified. If the subject's belief is indeed knowledge, I do not think that it would lack the kind of positive normative standing that we call 'justification'. On most views, if you do not justifiably believe *p*, you should not believe *p*. I don't think it makes much sense to concede that someone knows *p* only then to insist that they shouldn't believe it. (And if you want to cut the link between unjustified beliefs and beliefs that you shouldn't hold, you have to do considerable work explaining why your concept of justification is an interesting one. It doesn't appear to coincide with any natural, interesting normative standing.)

There is an important lesson to take from this. We see knowledge, justification, and rationality as positive standings. The standard view sees that standing as arising because some target beliefs are supported by reasons. Their aspiration seems to be to offer a kind of grounding thesis, one that says that status arises when it does *because* certain beliefs receive the right support from reasons. They think it would be a mistake to run things the other direction. Trying to account for reasons and their possession in terms of some status would defeat any attempt to ground epistemic status or reduce it to something else. Unfortunately, this will not work. The statuses we're interested in (i.e., knowledge and justification) cannot be understood in terms of the possession of reasons and some basing condition because possession is understood in terms of knowledge. The primary basis problem is a vivid illustration of the standard view's fatal flaw. It wants to put reasons to work but has no good story about how we acquire these reasons.²⁶

3.2 The Secondary Basis Problem

The primary basis problem arises when we try to give an adequate account of the rational support a belief must have to be a justified belief. When we think about the constraints imposed by the standard view, we see that the case of non-inferential belief is problematic. By virtue of being non-inferential, cases in which you believe something non-inferentially are not cases in which there is something that is your reason for believing what you do. Thus, the standard view is at odds with the non-skeptical assumption that we have some immediately justified beliefs. In this section, I shall introduce a secondary basis problem. This problem has to do not with the basis a belief has to receive in order to be justified but with the basis that we expect a belief to provide if it is justified.

If your belief in p is justified, this has important implications for further actions and attitudes. If you justifiably believe p , you have propositional justification to believe at least some of p 's obvious consequences. This is what weak closure principles tell us. If a belief is justified, the standard view assures us that it is justified because it rests on a sufficient evidential basis that provides it with its propositional justification *and* it can provide a basis for further belief. For this further belief to be justified, it too has to receive support from the evidence.

What has to happen for someone to V for the reason that p ? Among other things she has to V , p has to be true, and she has to take p to be both true and something that favors V -ing. These conditions are necessary but they are not sufficient. The connection between the fact that p and the belief in p might be purely accidental. Consider a modified experience machine. In the standard telling, there is a radical gap between appearance and reality because reality does not match the appearances. Trapped in the machine and falsely believing yourself to be living your normal life, it might appear to you that your sister is graduating and a smile might stretch across your face, but you aren't happy that your sister is graduating. You are happy because you think she is graduating. In the standard telling, she is not graduating. Maybe she dropped out. Maybe she has hit by a bus. Maybe she won the lottery. Maybe she already graduated, had a long and fulfilling career, and has retired. Because we know how to construct Gettier cases we can tell a version of the story in

²⁶ The story doesn't get better if you modify the standard view so that it includes mistaken claims about the ontology of reasons.

which your sister happens to graduate just as you come to believe she is. Maybe you have the experience as of reading about her graduation in an email and it just so happens that she graduated and her graduation went just as described. In this state, you are still completely detached from reality. In this state, you might luck into the odd true belief about events outside the machine, but your reason for smiling will not be that your sister graduated. That's a part of reality that you are completely cut off from, so such realities cannot be what rationally guides you. To V for the reason that p , you have to be in touch with the part of reality that consists of facts. This requires knowledge. Only a belief that constitutes knowledge is up to this task of providing reasons for further beliefs.²⁷

If we put these two ideas together, we see that the standard view is committed to something troubling. A belief is justified if it receives sufficient support from the evidence. Suppose a belief has that support. Such a belief should in turn provide sufficient support that justifies further belief. The standard view assures us that this happens because the belief provides evidential support for these further beliefs. Suppose your belief in p is inferential and you have forgotten your original grounds. Suppose your belief in p is justified. If it justifies any further belief, this further belief in q , say, is justified because it is supported by the facts that constitute your reason for believing this further proposition. Since you don't remember the original grounds for believing p , the only candidate for being the reason for which you believe q is p . Note two things. First, if someone *else* came to believe p mistakenly and forgot their original grounds, p could not be both false and capable of justifying further beliefs. It would not link these further beliefs to evidence that consists of facts. Thus, it seems that the present development of the standard view does not allow for any justified, false belief.²⁸ Second, if the belief in p is justified only if it is possible to V for the reason that p , it seems that the belief also has to be knowledge. Now it emerges that the standard view is committed to the rather unfortunate idea that among the conditions for justifiably believing p is that you believe p for reasons that guarantee that you know p .

²⁷ This kind of accidental connection case is trouble for accurate attitude accounts of evidence possession of the kind we find in Hofmann (2014), Mitova (2015), and Schroeder (2008, 2015). For views on which possessed evidence involves a non-accidental connection between the belief and the fact, see Hyman (1999), Littlejohn (2012), Mantel (2013), Unger (1975), and Williamson (2000).

²⁸ Bird (2007) and Williamson (2000) initially wanted non-factive accounts of justified belief on which a subject's evidence consists of what she knows, but this puts some pressure on Bird to choose between the standard view and a more radical account of justified belief of the sort that McDowell and Williamson now accept. The observation that propositional stored in memory should count as propositional evidence is one I owe to Bird's (2004) discussion of inferential evidence. In Littlejohn (2012) I argued that there could not be false, justified beliefs about what to do or believe. Similar arguments can be found in Gibbons (2013), Greco (2014), and Way and Whiting (forthcoming). These authors seem to think that this holds only in special cases, but in my (2012) argument against justified, false beliefs I pointed out that you can use closure principles to extend the point to non-normative beliefs. Once you agree that there cannot be false, justified beliefs about certain normative matters, it will be hard to constrain this to avoid the conclusion that beliefs about non-normative matters have to be true to be justified, too.

Once we have this picture of what it takes for a belief to provide the proper basis for the attitudes the belief rationalizes, we can see that the standard view faces a kind of skeptical problem:

A Skeptical Argument

1. If you justifiably believe p , you believe p and you believe p for reasons that consist of pieces of evidence that provide strong enough support for this belief. [The Dependence Thesis]
2. Your reasons for believing p provide strong enough support for this belief only if it is not possible to believe on the basis of these reasons and fail to conform to the norm(s) governing belief (i.e., the fact that you believe for these reasons entails that you conform to the norm(s) governing belief).
3. So, if you justifiably believe p , the fact that you believe for the reasons that you actually do entails that you conform to the norm(s) governing belief.
4. Knowledge is the norm of belief.²⁹
5. So, if you justifiably believe p , the fact that you believe for the reasons that you actually do entails that you know p .
6. In cases of inductive inference the fact that you believe p for the reasons that you actually do does *not* entail that you know p .
7. So, cases of inductive inference are not cases of justified belief.

This skeptical conclusion is one best avoided. Luckily, it is easily avoided.

Someone could contest (2) but I think this premise is innocuous. Remember that the standard view tells us that the subject's evidence completely settles whether there is propositional justification for her belief. When the subject has this justification for believing p , it is not the case that she should refrain from believing p . That is to say, she conforms to the norms that govern belief.³⁰

Because they treat (2) as all but axiomatic, traditional internalists will see this argument as a reason to reject the idea that knowledge is the norm of belief. This would be wrongheaded. You cannot settle questions about the point or purpose of belief by thinking about the kinds of reasons we could have for these beliefs (e.g., observations of past events) and the kinds of support these reasons provide (e.g.,

²⁹ For defenses of this premise, see Littlejohn (2013), Sutton (2007), and Williamson (2000). These authors along with McDowell agree that a belief is justified iff it constitutes knowledge.

³⁰ Bird (2007) suggests that justification might require something less than norm conformity. Bird is not alone in suggesting that there is something attractive about a view that combines the knowledge norm of belief with an account of justification that allows for justified beliefs that don't constitute knowledge. See also Miracchi (2015) and Smithies (2011). For arguments against accounts of justification according to which justification requires something less than conforming to norms, see Littlejohn (2012, 2013). In my view, these authors are conflating excuses with justifications.

fallible and defeasible support). You cannot settle questions about the norm of belief without taking a position on the point or purpose of belief. While the skeptic is mistaken in denying us knowledge and justification, we cannot show that this skeptical argument is mistaken simply by observing that our reasons for certain beliefs (e.g., beliefs formed by means of inductive inference) could never be good enough to ensure that these beliefs constituted knowledge in the sense required by the combination of (2) and (3). We cannot argue from the premise that our grounds are weak to the conclusion that our aim was never to know in the first place.

We should also now see why a proponent of the standard view is in no position to (4). If you believe p , you can only V for the reason that p if your belief constitutes knowledge. We saw above that if you combine this claim about ability with a closure principle and an observation about the persistence of justification after a subject loses her original grounds for forming a belief a proponent of the standard view has to say that a belief is justified only if it is knowledge. A belief is justified, recall, only if *it* can enable the subject to V for a reason and only beliefs that constitute knowledge provide that guarantee. When the original grounds are lost, the only thing it could provide as a reason is the fact that the belief concerns.

As with the primary basis problem, the obvious solution to the secondary basis problem is the rejection of the Dependence Thesis. If you can know p even when there is nothing that is your reason for believing p the ability to be guided by a reason that is the fact that p is not an ability you acquire only by forming a belief in response to evidence that you held independently. Once we see this, we can see that we also have to reject the Sufficiency Thesis. Suppose a subject can justifiably believe p without that belief being based on evidence (e.g., in the perceptual case, in the proprioception case, in the introspection case, etc.). A subject that similarly had no evidence that supported p might come to believe p and fail to know p . This second subject's belief in p would not provide her with a potential motivating reason that could be her reason for V-ing. Thus, it is a mistake to think that the evidence that these subjects shared in common prior to coming to believe p determined whether *they* had sufficient justification to believe p because only one of them did.

Once we see this possibility, we can see that propositional justification does not supervene upon the subject's evidence. In turn, this helps us to avoid three mistaken responses to the argument just sketched. The standard view forces us to choose between three unpalatable options concerning inductive inference. In reasoning from past observations to a conclusion some unobserved it seems that two subjects might draw the same conclusion for the very same reasons and for only one of these subjects to end up with a true belief. The proponent of the standard view is either forced to say one of these three things:

- (a) Contrary to how things might seem, these subjects' reasons for drawing their conclusions differed. The subject that formed a true belief had better reasons for drawing her conclusion than the subject that formed the false belief had.
- (b) These subjects' reasons for drawing their conclusions did not differ but the subject that formed the true belief could only justifiably form that belief if her reasons for forming that belief differed from the subject in the bad

case. Thus, neither ends up with a justified belief or knowledge.

(c) These subjects' reasons for drawing their conclusions did not differ but they were good enough reasons to justify both sets of beliefs.

Each response is problematic and we are only forced to choose amongst these options if we retain the Sufficiency Thesis. If we reject it, we can say the same thing for the case of inductive inference that we said for the case of non-inferential knowledge. When the subject is led to form a belief that constitutes knowledge, she had propositional justification for that belief precisely because she was in a position to know it. That she was in such a position does not supervene upon her possessed evidence, so the possessed evidence does not constitute the supervenience base for propositional justification.

4. The Path Principle

Proponents of the standard view are locked in a bad debate. Most of the proponents of the standard view (e.g., traditional internalists like Conee and Feldman or factualists about reasons who think that a belief could be justified without constituting knowledge) will argue that knowledge couldn't be the norm of belief (or that justified beliefs cannot be understood as beliefs that conform to epistemic norms) because they think, quite plausibly, that our potential reasons for belief almost never ensure that we are in a position to know. Since we know a great deal, they mistakenly conclude from this that justification or norm conformity requires something less than knowledge. Their opponents (e.g., McDowell and possibly Pritchard) will insist that knowledge is the norm of belief and insist that we can meet this norm. Because of this they will try to show that meeting this norm involves, *inter alia*, being moved by reasons so potent that it would be impossible for someone to be moved by these reasons and fail to end up 'in the know'.

People get trapped in this debate because they accept something like this principle:

The Path Principle: Facts about propositional justification are grounded in facts about the evidence you have and the independently specifiable support relations they stand in to the propositions you grasp. Whenever it would be appropriate for you to add a belief to your current belief set, this is because there is a path from your current belief set to your expanded set that is provided by your evidence. The path is available to anyone with your total evidence. For each justified belief you add, there would have had been such a path open to you that you followed.

Suppose we combine this idea with the further idea that knowledge is the norm of belief. The upshot would be that it would be appropriate to add p to your belief set only if the path you followed would lead anyone to knowledge if they followed the path equally competently. Since there would be no path like this for our perceptual beliefs unless something like epistemological disjunctivism were true, it is easy to see why McDowell and Pritchard are attracted to that view. Since there is no path like this that takes us from the premises of an inductive argument to its conclusion, it is easy to

see fans of more traditional internalist views reject the idea that a belief has to constitute knowledge to be justified.

We don't have to choose between these options. The case of perceptual belief is just the case that shows that there's something wrong with the Path Principle. Suppose that at noon I'm opening the door to my flat and I wonder where Agnes is. My evidence does not distinguish between two hypotheses:

H₁: She is sitting by the door.

H₂: She is standing on the table watching the squirrels through the window.

If I see her seated by the door, I could come to know that that's where she is. If, however, I saw her standing on the table, I could come to know that that's where she is. There is no path from the evidence I had before opening the door that led to one belief as opposed to the other. There is no evidential path after I open the door to one belief as opposed to another. My evidence only favors H₁ over H₂ as a result of coming to know H₁.³¹ Perceptual knowledge gives us our counterexamples to the Path Principle.

Another troubling test case for the Path Principle comes from cases of knowledge from false belief. If Tina's parents tell her that Santa will bring her presents, she might deduce from this that there will be presents waiting for her on Christmas morning. Tina might have only believed there would be presents because she thought that Santa would bring them. Tina might be fully aware of her parents' desperate financial situation. If Tina's parents would only tell her that Santa would bring presents if they had safely secured them beforehand, this looks like a good case of knowledge from non-knowledge.³² There would be nothing that would be Tina's reason for believing that she will receive presents on Christmas morning, but this belief is nevertheless justified. The Path Principle struggles with such cases because it either rules out too much (e.g., beliefs that constitute knowledge) or rules out too little (e.g., falsehoods that Tina could deduce from the premise that Santa is going to bring presents). Any path to knowledge is a path that is good enough, but Tina should reason to the conclusion that there will be presents but should not reason to the conclusion that her friends are mistaken if they say that Santa is a myth.

We can start to see why we should resist the temptation to accept the Path Principle if we think about its practical analogue. What would the practical analogues of the Dependence Thesis and Sufficiency Thesis look like? The analogue of the Dependence Thesis is that you have justification to act is only because there are reasons that could be your reasons for acting that provide strong support for so acting. The analogue of Sufficiency Thesis is that the justification of your action is settled by the support your reasons for acting provide. Cases in which you act without acting for any reason pose a serious problem for both claims. You might doodle intentionally

³¹ This is Williamson's Kierkegaardian leap. This is where McDowell and Williamson part company and I think this is precisely where the virtues of Williamson's view are most evident. Brown (2013), however, raises some interesting concerns about Williamson's view, focusing on the issue of whether a piece of evidence might be evidence for itself.

³² See Klein (2004) for a discussion of knowledge from falsehood cases and Luzzi (2010) for a discussion of their significance for closure and counter-closure principles. In Littlejohn (forthcoming) I argue that the cases that cause trouble for knowledge counter-closure can also be used to cause trouble for justification counter-closure.

and in full knowledge that you are doodling when there is nothing that is your reason for doodling. By your lights, there is nothing that counts in favor of doodling. Suppose you're right. Does it follow that your action isn't justified? No. If you permissibly doodle, your doodling must be justified. If it's not justified, however, you shouldn't doodle. If you shouldn't doodle, there would be a decisive reason for you not to doodle. There isn't one. At least, there needn't be one given the sketchy details of the case. (Remember that 'ought' implies 'reason'. Whenever you ought to refrain from doing something, there is at least some reason to refrain. And whenever you ought to do something, there is at least some reason to do it.)

5. Reasons For, Reasons Against, Liability and Justification

In defending the standard view, its defenders seem to think that the relationship between reasons and justification should be understood as follows. Support from potential motivating reasons or evidence determines whether there is justification to believe p and the belief is justified if the subject is moved to believe for these reasons. All the reasons that determine whether a belief is justified will be pieces of evidence, things that could move the subject to believe something.

The standard view misses something important. It focuses too much on the role that reasons play in moving you to believe and ignores the role that reasons against play in determining justificatory standing. Think back to the perceptual case before, the case in which I initially had evidence that supported H_1 and H_2 equally but then came to know H_1 by opening the door and seeing where Agnes was. The Path Principle would tell us that if your evidence supports two incompatible propositions equally well there would either be no clear path to either one or a clear path to either one. But it is clear that it would be appropriate to believe H_1 and inappropriate to believe H_2 . While the evidence that supports H_1 and H_2 does not distinguish between them the reasons that bear on whether to believe H_1 and H_2 clearly differ. There is a *decisive* reason not to believe H_2 and there is no reason not to believe H_1 . This is why I could justifiably believe H_1 and could not justifiably believe H_2 .

With this much in place, we have the resources to show that the Identity Thesis is false. Let's say that there's a norm that governs belief, one that says that you shouldn't believe p unless some condition obtains. Should and ought imply reason. Let's call the reasons associated with norms 'norm reasons' and let's call pieces of evidence 'evidential reasons'. The standard view seems to be that insofar as norm reasons bear on the justificatory status of belief they either are pieces of evidence or they at least supervene upon the evidence. The perceptual case shows that this is not the case:

An Argument Against the Identity Thesis

1. If the Identity Thesis is correct, norm reasons just are evidential reasons and thus norm reasons supervene upon evidential reasons (i.e., no difference in norm reasons without an evidential difference).
 2. In cases of justified perceptual belief, however, pairs of subjects with the very same evidential reasons can differ in terms of the norm reasons that bear on whether these subjects should believe certain propositions.
- C. Thus, the Identity Thesis is mistaken and the set of reasons that bears on whether to believe and determines

what the subject has justification to believe must be distinct from the set of evidential reasons.

Even if the standard view were correct, we could distinguish evidential reasons from norm reasons. If a subject believed p without sufficient evidence, she should not believe p . Since ought implies reason, there would be a norm reason in light of which she should not believe p . This reason, however, would not be an evidential reason.³³ Proponents of the standard view might think that they would have little reason to bother distinguishing these kinds of reasons because they would have to say (given the Sufficient Thesis) that all norm reasons supervene upon evidential reasons, but once we see that this supervenience thesis is mistaken, we can see why we must reject the Identity Thesis. It is only when we reject the Identity Thesis that we see why the Path Principle is mistaken.

The Path Principle tells us that the presence of a path has all to do with the kind of support provided by evidential reasons. This is mistake. If there is an appropriate route from your present set of beliefs to an expanded set, this has to do with norm reasons: there is an appropriate route iff there is no norm reason not to expand your belief set this way. Of course, one possible reason why there might be a norm reason not to expand your belief set might be that you do not have the right kind of evidence, but the absence of evidence is (a) only one potential reason why a path might be closed and (b) no guarantee that a path is closed.

If we want to state a theory of justification that captures the relation between reasons and justification, it should look something like this. A belief will be justified iff there is no norm reason not to hold that belief. Put differently, a belief will be justified if the subject who holds it conforms to the norms that govern belief. This is a purely formal claim about the relationship between reasons, justification, and norms. If we wanted to state something substantive about justification, we would need to identify the norms that govern belief.

I would suggest that the norm that governs belief is the knowledge norm, one that says that you should not believe what you do not know. If we combine this with the formal account of justification just sketched, we get the result that a belief is justified iff that belief constitutes knowledge. If it does not, there is a decisive reason not to hold that belief. If it does or would, there is no reason not to form or hold that belief.

The reader might wonder why we should think knowledge is the norm of belief. In discussions of epistemic value and of the aim of belief, people often say that true beliefs are a kind of fundamental epistemic good and that truth is the aim of belief. I think that there's a kernel of truth here. Beliefs are supposed to give us reasons that we can then use as guides. Specifically, they are supposed to give us potential motivating reasons, reasons that could be our reasons for believing things, feeling things, or doing things. Beliefs are supposed to put us in touch with the facts so that they can guide our thoughts, feelings, and actions. Because reasons are truths, only true beliefs can do what beliefs are supposed to do. This is why some true beliefs are good and why belief aims at the truth. As we've seen, though, only beliefs that constitute knowledge can give us these potential motivating reasons. When the connection between belief and fact is accidental, we cannot be guided by this fact in our beliefs, feelings, or actions.

³³ A point I owe to Owens (2000).

If we think about this link between belief and reason, we can rethink the relationship between reasons and status. It seems that one way of describing the fundamental norm of belief is as follows:

RN: You shouldn't believe p unless your belief in p ensures that p is among your potential motivating reasons for believing, feeling, and doing things.

If any belief you hold does not conform to this norm, there is a decisive reason *not* to hold that belief. Nothing could be said for it because the belief could not do the one thing it is supposed to do. Thus, this link between belief and reason suggests that there is a kind of liability that comes with belief. Whenever you form a belief, you are liable to violate a norm simply by virtue of forming a belief that couldn't enable you to believe, feel, or do things in light of how the belief presents things as being.

When we test candidate accounts of what it takes for a belief to conform to this norm, we can see that some standard proposals don't look very promising. If you think that strong evidential support is sufficient for conforming to whatever norm governs belief, this evidential norm (EN) combined with RN implies that if you believe p on the basis of sufficiently strong evidence, you'll be able to believe, feel, or do things for the reason that p . This, in turn, leads to an implausibly strong requirement on what sufficient evidential support comes to or an implausibly weak requirement on what it takes for you to be guided by facts. Since on most views of sufficient evidential support you can have sufficient evidential support for false beliefs, EN combined with RN suggests that you could be guided by facts that aren't facts.

If you combine RN with a standard formulation of TN according to which any true belief fulfills the aim of belief, we get the odd result that any true belief can ensure that you'll be guided by the facts (i.e., a view on which you can be guided by facts that are not facts). If we think about Gettiered versions of Nozick's experience machine, though, it seems it shouldn't too hard to think up cases in which an accurate belief isn't sufficient to put you in touch with reality. Since it doesn't put you in touch with reality, it doesn't enable you to be guided by reality. If it doesn't do that, the belief should violate RN in spite of conforming to TN. To my mind, this is a good reason to think that TN is not the fundamental norm of belief.³⁴

6. Evidence, Reasons, and Epistemic Supervenience

Let's consider two supervenience theses:

JSE: Justification supervenes upon the subject's evidence.

JSR: Justification supervenes upon the reasons that bear on whether the subject should believe.

Just as in ethics, we tend to think that like cases should be treated alike and that there might well be principles that identify the morally significant features of situations that tell us what to do we might think that in epistemology like cases should be treated alike and that there might be principles or norms that identify the epistemically significant features of situations that tell us what to believe. If we buy into this way of thinking and we accept these supervenience theses, they tell us how we should think of

³⁴ Although some proponents of TN have tried to show that justification requires more than mere truth on the grounds that the norms require more than mere conformity. See Whiting (2013) for discussion and Littlejohn (2013) for arguments that TN does not require enough.

situations. Situations would have to be individuated in such a way that any difference in epistemically relevant features would be traced to some difference or differences in the evidence possessed by the subjects in these situations. Just as the reasons that bear on what to do tell us how to handle a situation and aren't affected by things not morally relevant to a situation, the reasons that bear on what to believe and tell us how to handle a situation and aren't affected by things not epistemically relevant to that situation. According to JSE, the factors that aren't relevant to epistemic situations are those that don't supervene upon a subject's evidence.

Once we see why the Identity Thesis is false, we can see why JSE must also be mistaken. It is trivial that JSR holds. We have already seen that pairs of subjects with the very same evidence might have different norm reasons that apply to them. So, situations should not be individuated in terms of the subject's evidence but in terms of what the subject knows or is in a position to know.

7. Conclusion

The standard view is mistaken about two things. It conflates reasons and evidence and is wrong about the rational roles that they play. It is trivial that the reasons that bear on whether to believe, feel, or do something determine what can be justified, but it is a mistake to conclude from this that an individual's evidence entirely settles whether she could be justified in believing something. The reasons that determine whether we can believe with justification are provided by epistemic norms, not our evidence, and these norms determine how and the extent to which an individual's evidence matters in epistemic evaluation. We can now better see the limits of evidence in our theories of justification and knowledge.

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