

# Weak Non-Evidentialism

*First aim of this paper is to show that Evidentialism, when paired with a Psychologistic ontology of evidence, is unable to account for ordinary cases of inferential justification. As many epistemologists have maintained, however, when it is paired with a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, Evidentialism is unable to explain in a satisfactory way ordinary cases of perceptual justification. So, the Evidentialist is faced with a dilemma. Second aim of this paper is to give an argument in favour of Propositionalism about evidence, and so to motivate the conclusion that perceptual justification must be accounted for in non-evidentialist terms. By this I do not mean to defend a strongly Non-Evidentialist epistemology, according to which there are doxastic attitudes which are unsupported by any justifier. More modestly, I aim to motivate the weakly Non-Evidentialist epistemology according to which a subject's perceptual beliefs may be justified by non-evidential justifiers. I conclude the paper by explaining why I believe that Pryor's dogmatism supplies a model for the way in which an internalist who is persuaded by my argument might want to detail her weakly Non-Evidentialist account of perceptual justification.*

## §0 Introduction

Evidentialism about epistemic justification is the view, or family of views, according to which whether a belief that  $P$  is justified for a subject  $S$  at a time  $t$  just depends on the evidence that  $S$  possesses at  $t$ . Although a few epistemologists have contended that Evidentialism is compatible with *externalist* or *hybrid* conceptions of epistemic justification (Williamson 2000; Goldman 2011), the view under consideration is regarded by most of its proponents as an *internalist* view, or family of views, on epistemic justification (Conee and Feldman 2004; McCain 2014; Steup 2001). In this paper I shall set aside the question of whether the view under consideration is better understood as specifying an externalist or hybrid notion of justification, and shall programmatically align with the majority by treating

Evidentialism—thereby committing myself to assessing its success—as an internalist view.

In the extant literature, the paradigm of an Evidentialist internalist theory on epistemic justification is probably the position defended under the banner of ‘Evidentialism’ by E. Conee and R. Feldman (2004, 2008; see also McCain 2014). Although these authors have formulated their view by distilling several principles, the one that is most fit to convey their position is possibly this:

EJ    Doxastic attitude *D* toward proposition *p* is epistemically justified for *S* at *t* if and only if having *D* toward *p* fits the evidence *S* has at *t*.

(2004: 83)

As Conee and Feldman are ready to admit (2004: 84)—and many commentators have repeatedly observed (Comesaña 2010: 572; Dougherty 2011: 7 and 193; Rysiew 2011: 207; McCain 2014)—EJ cannot be taken to convey a specific theory of epistemic justification before one has taken a definite stance toward three distinct questions. The first question, Q1, asks under what conditions *E* is evidence for a given proposition *P*. The second question, Q2, asks what kind of thing *E* is supposed to be. The third question Q3, finally, asks what it takes for a subject *S* to have *E*. Depending on which answers to these questions one endorses, the acceptance of the general schema conveyed by EJ may commit one to a number of different Evidentialist theories about epistemic justification.

In this paper I shall concentrate, in particular, on Q2. In so doing, I pursue a twofold goal. My first aim is to refine an argument that I have already developed in

two papers of mine (XXX, YYY). In accordance with this argument, the Evidentialist who addresses the task of answering Q2 in principled terms is faced with a dilemma. If she answers Q2 by endorsing a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, she is unable to account for ordinary cases of *doxastic* perceptual justification. If she answers Q2 by endorsing a Psychologist ontology of evidence, she is unable to account for ordinary cases of *doxastic* inferential justification. The second aim of this paper is to offer a new argument for the conclusion that the Evidentialist should endorse a Propositionalist ontology of evidence. This argument, if successful, imposes the conclusion that EJ must be read in terms of a Propositionalist ontology of evidence. So, given the above dilemma, it imposes the conclusion that the Evidentialist is unable to account for ordinary cases of doxastic perceptual justification. This argument has hence the broader significance that most ordinary cases of doxastic perceptual justification must be explained in non-evidentialist terms.

By drawing the above conclusion, I shall defend what I call *Weak Non-Evidentialism*. In the way I propose to use this label, Weak Non-Evidentialism is the position to which one is committed if one denies the left-to-right conditional embedded within EJ; namely, if one contends that a subject S's belief can be epistemically justified even if it is not supported (even if it doesn't fit) S's evidence. Weak Non-Evidentialism is to be contrasted with *Strong Non-Evidentialism*, which is the claim that a subject S's belief can be epistemically justified even if there is *nothing* which justifies it. Certain forms of doxastic conservatism and C. Wright (2004)'s entitlement theory are versions of Strong Non-Evidentialism. Strong Non-

Evidentialism entails Weak Non-Evidentialism, but is not equivalent to it. The version I shall defend, in particular, accepts the conditional according to which if S's belief is epistemically justified, there is something which justifies it. It simply denies that what justifies a belief can always be regarded as part of S's evidence. Weak Non-Evidentialism can be externalist or internalist, depending on the nature of the non-evidential justifiers it countenances. A. Goldman's process reliabilism, which countenances the reliability of one's belief-forming processes as a non-evidential justifier, can be regarded as an externalist form of Weak Non-Evidentialism. The final part of the paper is devoted to the task of showing that Pryor (2000)'s dogmatism can be regarded as an internalist form of Weak Non-Evidentialism.

## **§1 Ontology of Evidence and EJ**

In this section, I address the question of what constitutes evidence, and explore the consequences of two possible answers to this question for the project of systematically explaining epistemic justification in evidentialist terms. In particular, I shall concentrate on *doxastic* justification. So some preliminaries are needed before we move on, for EJ is a principle of propositional justification, not of doxastic justification. Begin to consider the following rather intuitive principle connecting *propositional justification* and *doxastic justification*.

(J<sub>PD</sub>) If S's belief that P based on mental state M is doxastically justified to a certain degree, then, in virtue of being in M, S has the same degree of propositional justification for believing P.

This principle says that the epistemic basis of a doxastically justified belief can only be a mental state in virtue of which a subject has propositional justification. For instance, imagine Frank who justifiedly believes that it is snowing outside. If this is so, Frank must have based his belief on a mental state that gives him justification for believing that it is snowing. For instance, Frank must have formed the belief as a response to his having an experience as of snow falling on the ground, or to his hearing someone saying that it was snowing outside. Had Frank based his belief on a different mental state unsuited to give him propositional justification for believing that it is snowing—for instance, his *imagining* snow falling on the ground—his belief that it is snowing would not have been doxastically justified to start with.

Consider now that an upholder of EJ is committed to saying that if S has a certain degree of propositional justification for believing P, S has evidence E that supports P to that degree. An evidentialist that accepts EJ is hence committed to the following rewriting of (J<sub>PD</sub>):

(J<sub>PD</sub>\*) If S's belief that P based on mental state M is doxastically justified to a certain degree, then, *in virtue of being in M, S has evidence E supporting P to the same degree.*

It is important to note that ( $J_{PD}^*$ )'s consequent is ambiguous between two different readings, which depend on what answer one gives to the question (Q2) asking what constitutes evidence. So I now turn to these answers, and clarify how one who accepts these answers should read the consequent of ( $J_{PD}^*$ ).

The first answer—known as *Psychologism*—says that S's evidence is constituted by mental states of S. Different versions of this answer diverge over which mental state of S, in particular, should be taken to be elements of S's evidence. A first distinction is between those who require that a mental state have a mind-to-world direction of fit in order to be an element of S's evidence, and those that do not. The first theorists (e.g. McCain 2014) typically mention as elements of S's evidence S's beliefs, S's apparent perceptions, S's memories etc. The second theorists are more liberal, and also count as elements of S's evidence different psychological items, such as S's feelings and S's sensations (for instance Conee and Feldman 2011). A second distinction, internal to those who require a mind-to-world direction of fit, is between those who count as elements of S's evidence factive mental states—such as S's seeing that P, or S's remembering that P—as well as non-factive mental states—like S's perceptual or memorial seemings—and those who contend that S's evidence consists solely of non-factive mental states (Pritchard 2012 is a representative of the first category, and McCain 2014 a representative of the second).

The second answer—known as *Propositionalism*—says that S's evidence is constituted by propositions. An important distinction within the Propositionalist camp depends on whether it is contended that a proposition must be true in order

to be an element of one's evidence. Factive propositionalists (like Williamson 2000, and Littlejohn 2012) contend that only true propositions can be elements of S's evidence. Non-factive propositionalists (like Comesaña & McGrath 2014, and Rizzieri 2011) admit as elements of S's evidence both true and false propositions.

As emphasized by McCain (2014: 11), Psychologists and Propositionalists tend to agree that S's mental states uniquely determine what evidence is possessed by S. This is straightforward in the case of Psychologism, as the Psychologists *identify* S's evidence with (a specific subset, varying from one theory to another) of S's mental states. The Propositionalists however typically contend that S possesses E as evidence to the extent to which S is in some mental state having E as content. Most typically, when it is the content of a mental state, like a belief, having a mind-to-world direction of fit. So, also for a Propositionalist S's evidence is determined by which mental states S is in.

This being so, we must not forget that these two answers mandate two different readings of (J<sub>PD</sub>\*)'s consequent. If one endorses a Psychologistic theory of evidence, in particular, one is committed to reading this principle in the following way:

(J<sub>PD</sub>PS)      If S's belief that P based on mental state M is doxastically justified to a certain degree, *M is evidence supporting P to the same degree.*

If, on the other hand, one endorses a Propositionalist theory of evidence one is committed to reading this principle in the following way:

(J<sub>PD</sub>PR) If S's belief that P based on mental state M is doxastically justified to a certain degree, *M has as content a proposition supporting P to the same degree.*

(J<sub>PD</sub>PS) and (J<sub>PD</sub>PR) can be tested against examples. Suppose in fact that it is very intuitive that S's belief that P based on M is doxastically justified. (J<sub>PD</sub>PS) is refuted unless M is evidence supporting P. Alternatively, (J<sub>PD</sub>PR) is refuted unless M's content is evidence supporting P. Before carrying out these tests, however, we need to know what does it take for a mental state of M, or for M's content, to be evidence supporting a given proposition. In other words, we need an answer to Q1. In what follows, I shall primarily concentrate on the *explanationist* answer to Q1 that has been defended by contemporary Evidentialists like Conee & Feldman, and McCain. So, I shall test the adequacy of (J<sub>PD</sub>PR) and (J<sub>PD</sub>PR) against the backdrop of their *explanationist* theory of the support relation. After having carried out this task, I shall endeavour to show that the test is bound to give the same result against the backdrop of *any* alternative answer to Q1.

Contemporary evidentialists like Conee & Feldman (2008, 2011), and McCain (2014, 2015), endorse a Psychologistic ontology of evidence. So they have answered Q1 by stating the conditions on which a *mental state* M of S is evidence that a given proposition P is true. Their theory can however be adapted to a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, as stating the conditions on which M's



*propositional content* is evidence that P is true. According to McCain (2014)'s more recent and refined formulation:

(EX<sub>PS</sub>) M is evidence for S that P is true if and only if (i) P is part of the best explanation available to S of why S has M, or (ii) P is available to S as a consequence of the best explanation available to S of why S has M.

The Propositionalist variant of the latter *explanationist* principle says:

(EX<sub>PR</sub>) Proposition E is evidence for S that P is true if and only if (i) P is part of the best explanation available to S of the truth of E, or (ii) P is available to S as a consequence of the best explanation available to S of the truth of E.

It should be noted that, for *any* mental state M of S, on (EX<sub>PS</sub>) M is evidence for S that P is true if and only if on (EX<sub>PR</sub>) the proposition that S has M is evidence that P is true. For instance, let M be Agatha's memory that she had cereals for breakfast. Suppose Agatha is suffering amnesia, and that she is being treated to reactivate her memory. On this background, the best explanation available to Agatha of why she now seems to remember that she had cereals for breakfast is that (P) her therapy is starting to work. Hence on (EX<sub>PS</sub>) Agatha's memory M counts as evidence for the proposition (P) that the therapy is starting to work. By

the same token, the proposition ( $E_M$ ) that Agatha now seems to remember that she ate cereals for breakfast is on ( $EX_{PS}$ ) evidence that P is true. For P is part of the best explanation available to Agatha of the truth of  $E_M$ .

That a *mental state* M counts on ( $EX_{PS}$ ) as evidence that P is true if and only if the *proposition* that S has M counts on ( $EX_{PR}$ ) as evidence that P is true might easily invite the thought that the choice between a Psychologistic or a Propositionalist ontology of evidence does not really make a difference with respect to the conditions on which principles like EJ and  $J_{PD}$  predict that S possesses, respectively, propositional and doxastic justification. But this would be a mistake.

Suppose in fact that S *has* M but, not having reflected on this fact, she does not introspectively believe that she has M. Suppose further that S's background is such that P is part of the best explanation available to S as to why S has M. In a similar situation ( $EX_{PS}$ ) says that M is evidence that P is true, and ( $EX_{PR}$ ) says that the proposition that S has M is evidence that P is true. But S can be granted the possession of evidence that P is true only if one adopts a psychologist ontology of evidence. For since S did not form the introspective belief that she has M, S cannot be granted the possession of the proposition that she has M as evidence that P is true. Hence, EJ predicts that S has propositional justification for believing P only if this principle is read in light of a Psychologist ontology of evidence. Suppose further that S forms the belief that P on the basis of M, and suppose that this belief is doxastically justified. In accordance with  $J_{PD}^*$ , this fact can be explained only if in virtue of being in M S has evidence that P is true. More in particular, if one adopts

a Psychologistic ontology of evidence, this can be explained only if *M* is evidence that *P* is true; and if one adopts a Propositionalist ontology of evidence this can be explained only if *M*'s *content* is evidence that *P* is true. So, also in this case the relevant epistemic phenomena can only be accommodated if one adopts a Psychologistic ontology of evidence. For on a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, it is the proposition that *S* has *M*, and not *M*'s content itself, that is evidence that *P* is true.

To find good examples of how this might happen, we just have to look for ordinary cases in which a subject is intuitively justified in believing that *P* simply in virtue of the fact that *S* has the seeming or the apparent perception that *P*<sup>1</sup>. Take for instance Laura, who looks out of the window and has the seeming that (TREES) the trees in the garden are moved by the wind. Call Laura's perceptual seeming (*S*<sub>TREES</sub>). As it happens all of the times, Laura doesn't pause to reflect on the fact that she has this seeming, but as a spontaneous response to her *having* it she directly transitions to believing TREES. It is intuitive that Laura's belief in TREES is doxastically justified. This epistemic fact can be accommodated by *J*<sub>PD</sub>\* only if in virtue of having *S*<sub>TREES</sub> Laura has propositional justification for believing TREES. If one adopts a Psychologistic ontology of evidence, this demand is easily satisfied. For if Laura has just ordinary background information, the truth of TREES is part of the best explanation available to her of why she has *S*<sub>TREES</sub>. Hence, on *EX*<sub>PS</sub>,

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I endorse the view according to which the perceptual seeming that *P* is a non-factive propositional attitude, having *P* as its content, characterized by the distinctive phenomenal character of perceptually disclosing to one the truth of *P*. Many philosophers have struggled to describe what it is like to have the perceptual seeming that *P* by resorting to different metaphors. See for instance Pryor (2000), Huemer (2013), Tucker (2013).

$S_{\text{TRESS}}$  is evidence for Laura that P is true, and the consequent of  $J_{\text{PD}}\text{PS}$  is satisfied. On the other hand, if one adopts a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, the intuition that Laura is doxastically justified is jeopardized. In order to explain the intuitive fact that Laura is doxastically justified in believing TREES,  $J_{\text{PD}}\text{PR}$  requires that in virtue of having  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$  Laura has evidence that TREES is true. But this is not the case. On  $\text{EX}_{\text{PR}}$  the proposition that Laura has  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$  is evidence for her that P is true, but this is not evidence that Laura can be taken to possess in virtue of the fact that she has  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$ . In order to possess this evidence, Laura should introspectively believe that she has  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$ . But by the definition of the case, Laura doesn't form the introspective belief that she has  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$ , and so *a fortiori* she doesn't form the belief that TREE on the basis of this belief. Hence, the consequent of  $J_{\text{PD}}\text{PS}$  is *not* satisfied.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Of course Laura *has*  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$ , and in virtue of having this mental state Laura represents TREES as true. So, it might be suggested, in virtue of having this mental state Laura bears to the proposition that TREES the relation that S must bear to a proposition E if E is to be part of S's evidence. Hence, in virtue of having  $S_{\text{TRESS}}$  Laura has TREES available as part of her evidence (this suggestion is adumbrated in Dougherty 2011.) Notice, however, that on  $\text{EX}_{\text{PS}}$  TREES is *not* evidence that TREES is true. For the truth of the proposition that TREES is not available to Laura as part of the best explanation of the truth of TREES *itself!* The suggestion that Laura's belief in TREES is justified on the basis of evidence coinciding with TREES is not only problematic on  $\text{EX}_{\text{PS}}$ . As many epistemologists have contended, there is something inappropriate in the attempt to explain S's justification for believing a proposition P in terms of the possession as evidence of the very proposition that P. If S's sole piece of evidence bearing to P were P itself, in fact, S's epistemic situation would exhibit a *vicious circularity* that would be unable to generate the justification for believing P with which it is intuitive to credit S for the sole reason that it seems to her that P. For a clear statement of this complaint see Turri (2009: 497-8) and McCain (2014: 19). A related complaint, voiced by Glüer (2009: 305), is that the model at issue commits one to describing the formation of the belief that P on the basis of the seeming that P as the (stuttering) process whereby one *indefeasibly* infers P from the premise that P. Since perceptual beliefs are not risk-free, this indicates that the proposition that P cannot be the evidence on the basis of which S believes that P.

It must be added, in the opposite direction, that certain cases intuitively involving doxastically justified beliefs can only be accommodated by  $J_{PD}PR$ , and not by  $J_{PD}PS$ . So, these cases can just be accommodated if one endorses a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, and not if one endorses a Psychologist ontology of evidence. In these cases, it is intuitive that S justifiably believes P on the basis of a given mental state M, yet P is part of the best explanation not of why S has M, but of why M's *content* is true. Consider the following example, in which M coincides not with a perceptual seeming but with a *justified belief* of S. Suppose Rebecca forms the justified belief ( $B_1$ ) that a window in her apartment has been broken, and the justified belief ( $B_2$ ) that her safe has apparently been forced open while many of the valuables it contained disappeared. Rebecca competently infers from  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  the belief that (BREAK-IN) a burglar broke into her apartment. It is intuitive that Rebecca's belief that BREAK-IN is doxastically justified. This epistemic fact can be successfully accommodated only if in virtue of  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  Rebecca can be taken to have evidence that BREAK-IN is true. If one endorses a Psychologist ontology of evidence, in particular, this demand is satisfied only if, on ( $EX_{PS}$ ),  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  are evidence for Rebecca that BREAK-IN is true. However, on ( $EX_{PS}$ ),  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  are *not* evidence for Rebecca that P is true. What explains the fact that she has  $B_1$  is arguably Rebecca's perceptual seemings as of a broken window, and what explains that she has  $B_2$  is arguably Rebecca's perceptual seemings as of her safe open together with her awareness of being unable to locate the valuables that she remembers the safe contained. If one endorses a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, the demand that in virtue

of having  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  Rebecca has evidence that BREAK-IN is true is satisfied only if, on  $(EX_{PR})$ , *the content of  $B_1$  and  $B_2$*  is evidence for Rebecca that BREAK-IN is true. And, as it is easy to check, this demand is satisfied; for on  $(EX_{PR})$ , *the content of  $B_1$  and  $B_2$*  is evidence for Rebecca that P is true. In fact the truth of P—that a burglar broke into her apartment—is part of the best explanation available to Rebecca of why the content of  $B_1$  and  $B_2$  is true—namely of why the window of her apartment is broken, and the safe has been forced open while many valuables are missing.

What this shows is that the Evidentialist who endorses an *explanationist* answer to Q2 is faced with a dilemma. If she accepts a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, and so in particular accepts  $(EX_{PR})$ , the Evidentialist accounts in a natural way for ordinary cases of inferential justification, but then she is unable to account for ordinary cases of perceptual justification. If she accepts a Psychologist ontology of evidence, and so in particular accepts  $(EX_{PS})$ , the Evidentialist accounts in a natural way for ordinary cases of perceptual justification, but she is unable to account for ordinary cases of inferential justification. The moral that the above considerations illustrate does not seem to be relative to just the explanationist principles  $(EX_{PR})$  and  $(EX_{PS})$ . Rather, the dilemma between a Psychologist and a Propositionalist ontology of evidence illustrated above seems bound to re-emerge for *whatever* relation R one mentions in the attempt to answer Q1 in principled terms. Suppose, for any R, that the Psychologist and the Propositionalist respectively subscribe to the following principles:

(#<sub>PS</sub>) M is evidence for S that P is true if and only if the existence of M bears R to P.

and

(#<sub>PR</sub>) Proposition E is evidence for S that P is true if and only if the truth of E bears R to P.

Suppose M is S's seeming that P, and it is intuitive that S, as a spontaneous response to her simply *having* the seeming, forms the doxastically justified belief that P. In order to accommodate the intuition that S's belief that P is doxastically justified,  $J_{PD}^*$  requires that in virtue of having M, S has evidence that P is true.

Now suppose that (#<sub>PS</sub>) successfully accommodates this intuition, as the existence of M bears R to P. In this case, the relevant intuition is bound to remain unaccounted for by (#<sub>PR</sub>). For even if on (#<sub>PR</sub>) the proposition reporting the existence of M is evidence that P is true, this is not evidence that S can be taken to possess in virtue of having M. In the opposite direction, suppose M coincides with S's justified belief that E, and that S competently infers P from E. Suppose it is intuitive that S thereby forms the doxastically justified belief that P. Suppose further that E, but not the proposition that S has M, bears R to P. In this case, the relevant intuition is accounted for by (#<sub>PR</sub>). On (#<sub>PR</sub>) E is evidence that P is true. So the consequent of  $J_{PD}PR$ , which requires that the content of S's belief be

evidence that P is true, is satisfied. The relevant intuition, on the other hand, is bound to stay unaccounted if one accepts (#<sub>PS</sub>). By the definition of the case it is the truth of M's content E, and not the existence of M, that bears R to P. So on (#<sub>PS</sub>) M is not evidence that P is true, and so the consequent of J<sub>PD</sub>PS is unfulfilled.

## **§2 What Constitutes Evidence? A Propositionalist Answer**

It is a result of the preceding section that the Evidentialist who is faced with the choice between a Propositionalist and a Psychologist ontology of evidence cannot hope to successfully accommodate intuitive cases of perceptual and inferential justification at once. If she endorses a Psychologist ontology of evidence, her theory is naturally suited to explain intuitive cases of perceptual (doxastic) justification, but at the cost of being unable to explain intuitive cases of inferential (doxastic) justification. Conversely, if she endorses a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, her theory is naturally suited to explain intuitive cases of inferential (doxastic) justification, but at the cost of being unable to explain intuitive cases of perceptual (doxastic) justification. Either way, the Evidentialist can at best aspire to deliver a partial account of the relevant epistemic phenomena. In this section I address question Q2. I will start by rehearsing the dialectic between the Psychologists and the Propositionalist, and end the section by supplying a new argument in favour of Propositionalism. By so doing, my fundamental aim is to show that Evidentialism is unable to accommodate on its own terms intuitive cases



of doxastic perceptual justification, and so to motivate the claim that perceptual justification must be accounted for in non-evidentialist terms.

In response to Q2, Conee and Feldman endorse a Psychologistic answer, saying in particular that S's evidence is constituted by S's non-factive *mental states* (2004: 2, 76, 84, 112; 2008: 84, 87, 91, 96). This answer to Q2 has not stayed unchallenged. In particular, it has been challenged in light of very plausible arguments—put forward by T. Williamson (2000: 194-97)—for the conclusion that a subject S's evidence could just be constituted by *propositions*. These arguments exhibit a common feature: they all isolate certain roles that evidence is supposed to play, and conclude that evidence is constituted by propositions from the premise that just propositions could play these roles<sup>3</sup>. In what follows I shall concentrate my attention to the first of Williamson's arguments. The similarity with Williamson's second and third argument makes the discussion about the first argument easy to apply to those arguments.

The first argument proposed by Williamson is premised on the claim that (1) a subject S's evidence is the kind of thing that hypotheses explain, and on the claim that (2) the kind of thing that hypotheses explain are propositions, and concludes (3) that S's evidence consists of propositions. In response, Conee and Feldman have maintained that also S's mental states, in some plausible sense, are explained by hypotheses. Here is the relevant passage, where Conee and

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes Williamson presents these arguments as aimed to show that evidence is *propositional*, rather than *constituted by propositions*. However, as he clarifies explicitly, by 'propositional' he means 'constituted by propositions'. For instance he writes that 'one's evidence is propositional if and only if it is a set of propositions' (2000: 194).

Feldman critically address Williamson's claim that hypotheses just explain propositions:

We will use another example from Tim Williamson ... that of explaining World War I. ... The occurrence of the one huge event, WWI, that is the combination of all of these things, can be explained by giving an argument the conclusion of which read 'and so WWI occurred'. The last two words do express the proposition that WWI occurred. That proposition is the conclusion of the explanatory reasoning. What is explained, though, is not the proposition, but the occurrence of the war that the proposition asserts to have occurred (2011: 322)

In Conee and Feldman's opinion, explanatory arguments do not explain propositions, but the events that these propositions report as occurring. So, an explanatory argument featuring as its conclusion a proposition reporting the occurrence of WWI does not explain this proposition, but WWI itself, the event the proposition reports as having occurred. In the same way, against (2), a hypothesis H explaining why mental state M occurs in S's mind does not explain the proposition reporting the occurrence of M, but M's occurrence itself.

The most urgent question raised by Conee and Feldman's reply is about whether an explanation should be taken to explain an event or the truth of the proposition reporting it. In what follows I shall address this question by rehearsing an argument put forward by C. Littlejohn (2012) for the claim that explanations do not feature events as *explanans*, and by defending it from the charge, recently levelled against it by K. McCain (2014), of being unsound. Then I shall discuss some complications having to do with criteria for event identity, and finally present

a novel argument for the claim that explanations do not feature events as *explananda*.

Here is Littlejohn's argument. Coop drinks a wine, and the wine causes Coop to vomit. The wine is in fact poisoned, and is a Burgundy. Coop's drinking the wine, Coop's drinking the poison, and Coop's drinking the Burgundy are therefore one and the same event. Hence, each event causes Coop to vomit. However, only the event of Coop's drinking a poisonous wine explains why Coop vomits. Hence events do not figure in arguments as *explanans*. Quite recently, K. McCain (2014: 16-7) has argued that Littlejohn's argument is *unsound*. According to McCain, the argument must be reconstructed as follows:

1. Coop's drinking the poison and his drinking a Burgundy are the same event.
2. Coop's drinking the poison caused him to vomit.
3. If (1) and (2), then Coop's drinking a Burgundy caused him to vomit.
4. Coop's drinking a Burgundy caused him to vomit. (from 1, 2, 3)
5. If events figure in explanations as explanans/explananda, then, for all events A and B, if event A caused event B, then event A explains event B.
6. Coop's drinking a Burgundy does not explain his vomiting.
7. Events do not figure in explanations as explanans/explananda. (from 4, 5, 6)

McCain does not question premise 1. According to him, the argument is unsound because premise 5 and premise 6 cannot be true together. Premise 5—he suggests—is true only if “explains” is read as “is part of an explanation”. To illustrate the point, McCain mentions the presence of oxygen in the environment.

According to him, the presence of the oxygen is a cause of the house burning down. However the house burning down is not fully explained by the presence of the oxygen in the environment. The latter condition is at best an element of the explanation of why this has happened. When “explains” is read as “is part of an explanation”, however, premise 6 turns out false. Although it does not fully explain why Coop vomits—McCain suggests—Coop’s drinking a Burgundy is at least part of the explanation of why Coop vomits.

McCain’s assessment of Littlejohn’s argument is unconvincing. McCain is not explicit about what he means by “part of an explanation”. What he says, however, suggests that he takes at least three conditions to be sufficient for A’s being part of the explanation of B.

As seen above, McCain argues that the presence of oxygen is part of an explanation of why the house burned down. Since the presence of oxygen is necessary but not also sufficient for the house burning down, this suggests that, for McCain:

PE1 A is part of the explanation of B when A is necessary but is not also sufficient for B.

The condition specified by PE1’s antecedent seems sufficient for A’s being in some plausible sense part of the explanation of B. However, PE1 is unsuitable for the purpose to show that premise 6, with “explains” read as “is part of an explanation”, is false. For Coop’s drinking a Burgundy *is not necessary* for Coop’s vomiting.

Hence, at least as far as PE1 goes, premise 6 can still be true even when “explains” is read as in 5 as meaning “is part of an explanation”.

While arguing that, properly interpreted, 6 is false McCain also mentions that Coop’s drinking a Burgundy increases the probability of Coop’s vomiting. Moreover, he correctly observes that the way in which Coop’s situation is described suggests that Coop would not have vomited if he had not drunk the Burgundy. This suggests that for McCain it is also true that:

PE2 A is part of the explanation of B when A increases B’s probability.

PE3 A is part of the explanation of B when A would not have been the case had B not been the case.

PE2 and PE3 fare better than PE1 with respect to the task of showing that, in some sense, Coop’s drinking the Burgundy is part of the explanation of Coop’s vomiting. For the conditions specified by their antecedents seem to be satisfied in Coop’s case. The probability that Coop vomits given that Coop drank a Burgundy seems to exceed the probability that Coop vomits given whatever else we are told by Littlejohn about Coop’s situation. Moreover, nothing in the way this situation is described suggests that Coop would have vomited also if he had refrained from drinking the (poisoned) Burgundy. The problem is however that PE2 and PE3 are both false: their antecedents can be satisfied when A is not even part of an explanation of why B is the case.

Let A be Lee Harvey Oswald shooting JFK three times at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 22, 1963, and let B be JFK's being fatally shot at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 22, 1963. For the argument's sake, suppose that none of Oswald's gunshots has hit JFK and that the fatal gunshot has been fired by a second sniper, who has remained unknown. Also suppose that Oswald and the second sniper had agreed to act in tandem: no one would have fired if the other had not fired in turn. Intuitively, A is not part of the explanation of B. None of Oswald's doings explains why JFK has been fatally shot at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 22, 1963. However PE2 and PE3 are both satisfied. On the one hand, Oswald shooting JFK three times at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, November 22, 1963 dramatically increased the probability that, by that time, JFK should be fatally shot. Moreover, if Oswald had not fired, the second sniper would have refrained from firing, and JFK would not have been fatally shot.

McCain does not seem to have succeeded to show that, on some admissible notion of "being part of an explanation", Coop's drinking a Burgundy is part of the explanation of why Coop vomited. So, no matter how we read premise 5 in Littlejohn's original argument, premise 6 has not been successfully shown to be false.

A different line of attack that McCain could have pursued targets premise 1, according to which Coop's drinking the Burgundy is the same event as Coop's drinking the poison. If one event isn't identical with the other, Coop's drinking the Burgundy need not be the cause of Coop's vomiting; and if Coop's drinking the Burgundy is not the cause of Coop's vomiting, premises 5 and 6 no longer entail

that events do not figure in explanations as *explanans/explananda*. So is premise 1 true? This depends on how coarse grained a criterion of event identity one adopts. Along with one rather popular criterion, associated to Quine and Davidson, event A1 and event A2 are one and the same event if and only if they occupy the same space-time region. On the Quine-Davidson criterion, Coop's drinking the poison and Coop's drinking the wine count as one and the same event. So, at least if one adopts this criterion, premise 1 is safe. But as is well known, the Quine-Davidson criterion has not stayed unchallenged and has been criticised in light of examples adduced by Davidson himself (1980: 178).<sup>4</sup> According to a different proposal, due to J. Kim (1993), events are instantiations of properties by objects. On such a conception, an event A1 of the form <the instantiation by x of property P at t> and an event A2 of the form <the instantiation by y of property Q at t'> are one and the same event if and only if  $x = y$ ,  $P = Q$ , and  $t = t'$ . On Kim's criterion, differently than on the Quine-Davidson criterion, premise 1 of Littlejohn's argument turns out false. The property of drinking the poison and the property of drinking the Burgundy are distinct properties. So, although they are instantiated by the same object (Coop) at the same time, they are constituents of different events. Also Kim's criterion, however, has not stayed immune from criticism. One recurrent objection is that it is too discriminating: it counts as being distinct events that, intuitively, are one and the same event.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In one such example, a ball rotates through 35 degrees and, at the very same time, it warms up. Plausibly, these are separate events but they occupy the same space-time region.

<sup>5</sup> To many, for instance, Brutus' stabbing Caesar seem to be the very same event as the event of Brutus killing Caesar. However, the relational property of stabbing

It is fair to say that which criterion should be adopted is a very controversial issue in contemporary philosophy. Since addressing this question exceeds the scope of this paper, in what follows I shall try to strengthen Littlejohn's case for Propositionalism by giving an argument which is premised— rather than potentially rebutted on the basis of—Kim's criterion of event identity. This argument directly aims to establish the conclusion that just propositions, and not events, figure in explanations as *explananda*.

A soldier, at the marketplace, sees the death making (what he takes to be) a menacing gesture towards him. Frightened, he flees to Samarkand, which he believes not to be the place where he has a rendez-vous with the death. But Samarkand, unbeknownst to him, *is* the place where he has a rendez-vous with the death; and the death's gesture was just a way of expressing surprise for seeing the soldier far away from the place in which she knew they had a rendez-vous. It might seem intuitive that the soldier's desire not to die, together with his belief that Samarkand is not the place where he had a rendez-vous with the death (call the latter pair *DB*), fully explains an event: (*e1*) his going to Samarkand. But this cannot be so. Begin to note that 'Samarkand' and 'the place where the soldier has a rendez-vous with the death' refer to one and the same place. Hence, by Kim's criterion of event identity, (*e1*) is identical with (*e2*) the soldier going to the place where he has a rendez-vous with the death<sup>6</sup>. Now consider the following very plausible principle about explanation.

someone is different than the property of killing someone. So these events are distinct on Kim's criterion.

<sup>6</sup> An anonymous referee has observed that whether on Kim's criterion *e1* and *e2* should count as the same event depends on whether "going to Samarkand" and "going



(EX-ID) For all X, Y and Z if X is sufficient to explain Y, and  $Y = Z$ , X is sufficient to explain Z.

(EX-ID) is very general, as its plausibility does not depend on any specific theory of the metaphysical nature of X, Y and Z. (EX-ID) just commits to saying that explanatory sufficiency, whatever else its *relata* are taken to be, is closed under identity: if Y and Z are identical, it cannot be that X is sufficient to explain Y and that it is not sufficient to explain Z. Now take up again the initially intuitive claim that *DB* fully explains (*e1*). Since (*e1*) and (*e2*) are one and the same event, it follows by (EX-ID) that *DB* cannot be sufficient to explain (*e1*) without at the same being sufficient to explain (*e2*). But *DB* is sufficient to explain (*e2*): the soldier's desire not to die and his belief that Samarkand is not the place where he had a rendez-vous, by themselves, are not sufficient to explain why the soldier goes to the place where he has a rendez-vous with the death! Hence, *DB* does not fully explain (*e1*) either. Importantly, from this it does not also follow that *DB* does not explain why the soldier went to Samarkand. The more limited moral illustrated by

where the soldier has a rendez-vous with the death" signify the same property. The latter question is not settled by Kim's criterion and has sparked intense discussion. While Kim himself (1969: 202) has explicitly committed himself to regarding events like *e1* and *e2* as the same event, Bennett (1988: 82-87) has maintained that Kim's criterion, once paired with the claim that events like *e1* and *e2* are the same event, engenders inconsistent consequences. Fortunately, I think that for the purpose of the present paper we can avoid delving into this complex debate by disconnecting the question whether on Kim's approach *e1* and *e2* are the same event from the question about whether "going to Samarkand" and "going where the soldier has a rendez-vous with the death" express the same property. This, I believe, can be done by simply assuming that *e1* and *e2* are the same event because they are instantiations by the same entities, namely the soldier and Samarkand, of the same property, namely the property expressed by the dyadic predicate "going to".

the argument above is that *DB* does not explain an event—(*e1*)—but a proposition—the proposition that reports the occurrence of (*e1*). This conclusion is not inconsistent with the demands of (EX-ID): the proposition reporting (*e1*) differs from the proposition reporting (*e2*). So, *DB*'s inability to explain why the soldiers went to the place where he had a rendez-vous with the death is entirely consistent with the fact that *DB* fully explains why the soldier went to Samarkand.

### §3 Weak Non-Evidentialism About Perceptual Justification

In accordance with the conclusion of section 1, the Evidentialist is faced with a dilemma. If she endorses a Psychologist ontology of evidence, she's unable to accommodate intuitive cases involving inferential (doxastic) justification—cases in which a subject intuitively forms a justified belief that *Q* by inferring it from a different belief. If she endorses a Propositionalist ontology of evidence, she is unable to accommodate intuitive cases involving perceptual (doxastic) justification. To the extent to which the Evidentialist must occupy one horn of this dilemma, this shows that there is no way to fill in the details of the evidentialist position—in particular no way to answer Q2—which is able to vindicate it.

According to the conclusion of the last section, the Evidentialist has reasons to occupy the Propositionalist horn of the dilemma. This shows that the evidentialist has reasons to answer Q2 in a way that renders her position unable to accommodate intuitive cases of doxastic perceptual justification.

As anticipated at the end of the introductory section, I take the latter conclusion to motivate a *weak form of Non-Evidentialism*. Weak Non-

Evidentialism differs from stronger versions of Non-Evidentialism because it is compatible with the following principle:

*Justifier Principle (JP)*

If S's doxastic attitude D toward proposition P is epistemically justified for S at *t*, there is some justifier J in virtue of which D is epistemically justified for S at *t*.

To uphold Strong Non-Evidentialism one must deny JP. Doxastic Conservatism and Wright (2004)'s Entitlement theory are versions of Strong Non-Evidentialism precisely because they are inconsistent with this principle. The former view says, roughly, that a subject's belief may be justified for the sole fact that it exists. So, acceptance of Doxastic Conservatism clearly commits to the possible existence of justified beliefs that are justified even if there is no justifier which justifies them<sup>7</sup>. The latter view says that a subject's attitude of trust or acceptance that certain general presuppositions of our cognitive projects are satisfied may be warranted by default, even in the absence of any cognitive accomplishment on the part of the subject.

<sup>7</sup> D. Christensen (1994) correctly observes that in certain cases the mere fact that S has the belief that P may itself be evidence for S that P is true. Suppose S believes P, and that S, even if she has no evidence for believing that P, justifiably believes that she wouldn't have formed the belief that P if P had been false. In this case, the very existence of S's belief that P is some evidence for S that P is true. Although the doxastic conservative can grant this point, this is not the kind of situation she has in mind when she advocates her position. Rather, she means that one's having a belief justifies one in maintaining the belief even if the fact that one has the belief is not in itself evidence that the belief is true.

To be a Weak Non-Evidentialist one has just to deny the weaker left-to-right conditional embedded within EJ, saying:

$EJ_{L-R}$

If S's doxastic attitude D toward proposition P is epistemically justified for S at  $t$ , having D toward P fits the evidence that S has at  $t$ .<sup>8</sup>

The form of Weak Non-Evidentialism motivated in this paper, in particular, maintains that  $EJ_{L-R}$  is falsified by S's perceptual belief, whose justificatory status cannot be accommodate in evidentialist terms. This Weak Non-Evidentialism can be externalist or internalist, depending on the nature of the non-evidential justifiers it countenances for our perceptual beliefs. It is externalist if these non-evidential justifiers are not introspectively accessible or if they are non-mental.

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that  $EJ_{L-R}$  is weaker than JP only if the notion of a justifier of P is more general than the notion of evidence which is central to  $EJ_{L-R}$ . In other words, only if something can be regarded as a *justifier* without, at the same time, being properly regarded as (something in virtue of which one has) *evidence*, namely as an *evidential* justifier. This is not obvious. C. Wright, for instance, presupposes a very broad notion of evidence—one “encompassing both *a priori* and empirical considerations for the truth of the warranted proposition” (2004: 175)—when he characterizes his notion of entitlement as a non-evidential type of warrant. So it is not obvious, from Wright's perspective, that JP is logically stronger than  $EJ_{L-R}$ . Much to the contrary, it seems that for Wright the label “justifier” and “evidential justifier” come to one and the same thing. Note, however, that Wright's reading is not the reading of  $EJ_{L-R}$  that a considered Evidentialist ought to endorse. Principles like EJ and  $J_{PD}^*$  are proposed as analyses or explanations of epistemic notions such as propositional and doxastic justification. So, they cannot rest on a notion of evidence simply meant to be equivalent to the notion of a *justifier*. As aptly noted by A. Goldman, in fact, “if ‘evidence’ is defined as ‘that which justifies belief’, then the definition of ‘justified’ in terms of ‘evidence’, as proposed in EJ, is circular and unhelpful” (2011: 255). So, at least in the context of the present discussion, we can assume that  $EJ_{L-R}$  and JP are not equivalent principles, and that there is conceptual room for the weakly Non-Evidentialist position of one who accepts the latter principle while denying the former one.

On the other hand, it is internalist if these non-evidential justifiers are introspectively accessible or if they are mental.

The position advocated by J. Lyons (2016) is an example of an externalist weakly Non-Evidentialist position. On the one hand, Lyons accepts the claim that S's beliefs may justify other beliefs of S by serving as evidence for those beliefs. Lyons also accepts that the justificatory status of S's perceptual beliefs requires a substantial explanation in terms of justifiers. However, he denies that S's perceptual experiences justify S's perceptual beliefs in the specific way of serving as evidence for those beliefs. Rather, he defends that view that S's perceptual beliefs are justified—when they are—in virtue of the fact that they are reliably produced by a perceptual module. The Non-Evidentialist component of Lyons' theory is of a distinctively externalist character. For whether or not the relevant belief has been reliably produced by a perceptual module is not something that one can ascertain simply of the basis of introspection, neither is it a feature of one's mental life. So Lyons' variety of weak Non-Evidentialism is externalist. Since Evidentialism is primarily proposed as an internalist theory, it might appear natural to think that this is exactly how Weak Non-Evidentialism should be. In other words, it might appear natural to conceive of the category of *non-evidential justifiers* and of *externalist justifiers* as entirely overlapping. But this, as we have seen, is a mistake. The Evidentialist is committed to providing a detailed explanation of what she means by "evidence". So it obviously constitutes a possibility that a justifier which is internal in either the sense of being introspectively accessible, or in the sense of being a feature of one's mental life,

still fail to qualify in the relevant sense as (providing one with) *evidence*. So Internalist Weak Non-Evidentialism clearly constitutes a possibility. In the reminder of this section I wish to substantiate the suggestion that M. Huemer's Phenomenal Conservatism (Huemer 2001, and 2007), and J. Pryor's Dogmatism (Pryor 2000) can be regarded as examples of a similar view. In particular, I wish to suggest that on these views S's perceptual seemings count as internalist justifiers even if they don't justify S's perceptual beliefs by providing evidence.

According to the former, more general, view, if it seems to S that P is true S thereby acquires some degree of prima facie justification for believing P. As we have already seen, according to most theorists when S has a seeming that P S has a certain sort of experience, essentially characterized by *felt veridicality*, which has propositional content P but cannot be analysed in terms of belief. When one has a seeming that P one has the feel of having a mental state whose propositional content reveals how things really are (cf. Tucker 2013: §1.1). Experiences constituting seemings include memorial seemings—it seeming to one to have had eggs for breakfast—, intellectual seemings—it seeming to one that 2 plus 2 equals 4—, and perceptual seemings—it seeming to one as if there are two hands before one's nose. Pryor's Dogmatism concentrates on the justificatory power of S's perceptual seemings, and is the view that "when it perceptually seems to you as if *p* is the case, you have a kind of justification for believing *p* that does not presuppose or rest on your justification for anything else" (2000: 519). Both Huemer's Phenomenal Conservatism and Pryor's Dogmatism have an internalist character because, roughly, seeming-based

justification appears to be determined only by factors that are internal to the subject's cognitive perspective. This is true both in the sense that seemings are mental states, and in the sense that seemings can be known to occur on the basis of introspection alone. In what follows I shall concentrate on Pryor's Dogmatism only, because it focuses on experiential justification, which is the issue discussed within this paper.

Pryor maintains that when your perceptual seeming that P gives you justification for believing that P,

it would be misleading to call these experiences your "evidence" for believing *p*. For saying that your experiences are your "evidence" for a perceptual belief suggests that your justification for that perceptual belief depends in part on *premises* about your experience—as if you were introspectively aware of your experiences, and your perceptual belief were based in some way on that awareness. The dogmatist denies that you need any "evidence" of that sort for your perceptual beliefs.

(2000: 519)

From what Pryor says, it is not entirely clear what he means by "evidence". It strikes me, however, that the quote above is perfectly made sense of if one assumes the claim that I have been arguing for in this paper, according to which S's evidence for P is always constituted by propositions, and according to which a proposition E is evidence for a proposition P if and only if E bears some relation R to P—like the relation of being at least in part best explained by, exploited by

EX<sub>PR</sub>—such that P can be inferred from E. So, for the limited purpose to show that Pryor's dogmatism can be interpreted as a form of Weak Non-Evidentialism, for the remainder of this section I shall read Pryor against the backdrop of the propositionalist account of evidence sketched above. To attain this goal, it is not necessary to credit Pryor with any specific answer to Q1—the question about when a given piece of evidence E supports a proposition P. So, I shall simply assume that if E is evidence for P, the relation between E and P is such that P can be inferred from P. This is enough to make sense of Pryor's claim that in virtue of becoming aware of the fact that she has the seeming that P, S can acquire justification for believing P that is independent of—and additional with respect to—the justification for believing P that S has simply in virtue of *having* the seeming that P.

Of course, you can *become* aware of your experiences, by introspection. And your introspective awareness that you have experiences of certain sorts might, together with appropriate background beliefs, provide you with *additional* reason to believe *p*. The dogmatist does not deny that. He allows that you may have some justification for believing *p* that does rest on your introspective awareness of your experiences, and on background beliefs.

(2000: *ibidem*)

As seen above, the relation between the proposition that P and the proposition that S has the seeming that P is such that, in the presence of the right background beliefs, one proposition can be inferred from another. For instance, if



S believes that her perceptual faculties are working as they should in a cooperative environment, the truth of P is available to her as part of the best explanation of why she has the seeming that P. Thus, against similar background beliefs P is available to S as the conclusion of an inference to the best explanation from the premise that she has the seeming. This means that when S becomes aware, and comes introspectively to believe, that she has the seeming that P, she acquires the proposition that she has the seeming that P as *evidence* that P is true.

Pryor's main point is that the contribution of the seeming that P to the justification of S's possible belief that P is also, and perhaps primarily, not to be understood in these terms. It is here that Pryor characterizes the non-evidentialist part of his theory.

The dogmatist thinks that the *mere having* of an experience as of *p* is enough for your perceptual justification for believing *p* to be in place. You do not, in addition, have to be *aware of* your experiences and appeal to facts about them as "evidence" for your perceptual beliefs.

(2000: *ibidem*)

According to Pryor, in virtue of *having* the seeming that P S is not creditable with the possession of *evidence* that P is true. However, in virtue of *having* the seeming S is creditable with the possession of some degree of propositional justification for believing P. Hence for Pryor both EJ and J<sub>PD</sub>\* are violated. There are possible epistemic circumstances—those in which it perceptually seems to S

that P, and in which S has not become aware of this fact—in which believing P is epistemically justified for S, yet believing P is not supported by (it does not fit) S's *evidence* that P is true. And a belief of S based on a mental state M can be doxastically justified—when M is S's perceptual seeming that P—even if it is false that in virtue of being in M S has evidence that P is true.

This suggests that Pryor can be coherently read as advocating an internalist weakly Non-Evidentialist theory of epistemic justification. In its broadest outline, the theory in question construes *inferential justification*—the justification one has for believing a proposition P in virtue of justifiedly believing different propositions E1 ... En—in evidentialist terms. More specifically, as the justification one has for believing P in virtue of having E1 ... En available as evidence that P is true. The justification that S has for believing P in virtue of non-doxastic states such as the perceptual seeming that P is accounted for in non-evidentialist terms, as justification that one does not have in virtue of having available evidence that P is true. The justification for believing P that S may have in virtue of her introspective belief that it perceptually seems to her that P is true is a special case of inferential justification, because S's introspective belief that S has the seeming makes available to S the proposition that S has the seeming as evidence for S that P is true. But this justification is not to be conflated with the justification that S has simply in virtue of having the seeming.

If what precedes is on the right track, Pryor's dogmatism can be interpreted as a Weak form of Non-Evidentialism, namely as a theory which advocates a specific conception of evidence and evidential justification, and

contends that a specific form of epistemic justification, the one had in virtue of having a perceptual seeming that P, is not evidential in this sense. This, as is clear, leaves one with the question of how the latter justification is to be explained. Evidentialism, interpreted in the way I have suggested, conveys an *explanation* of justification. In particular, it says that when one has evidence E that P is true one is justified in believing P *because* in this case one justifiably believes E, and (one is aware) that P being the conclusion of an inference having E as a premise, if E is true P is (at least likely to be) true. To say that S's justification for believing P based on the seeming that P *is not evidential* in this sense is to say that it is not justification that can be explained in the same way. So before her position can be taken into account as a viable alternative, it is clearly incumbent on the Weak Non-Evidentialist I have been describing to tell an alternative story which explains S's justification for believing P based on the seeming that P. In response to this question, many have contended that this justification is possessed in virtue of the peculiar way in which the experience assertively presents its content, namely with the distinctive phenomenology of disclosing to one this content as true (Tolhurst 1998; Pryor 2000, 2004; Huemer 2001; Bengson 2015). The rough idea is that given this phenomenology, epistemic rationality, absent reasons for believing otherwise, cannot permit anything different than accepting the content of the seeming as true. After all, when one is struck by the feeling of being presented with the truth of P, and one has no reasons for believing otherwise, believing P is surely preferable to disbelieving P or to treating P and not P on a par and refraining from either

believing or disbelieving P. This answer is not universally accepted and is certainly beset with problems. To name just one, it is afflicted by the problem of cognitive penetration, which is the problem that a badly cognitively penetrated seeming, though phenomenologically indistinguishable from a perceptual seeming that is not cognitively penetrated (or cognitively penetrated in a bad way), does not have the power to justify one in accepting its content as true (Markie 2005.)<sup>9</sup> So, even granting that cognitively non-penetrated seemings *have* the power to justify one in accepting their content, it must be admitted that their phenomenology, which is something they have in common with their cognitively penetrated counterparts, cannot exhaust the explanation of why it is so.<sup>10</sup>

Whether this explanation can be made to work, and whether it can be successfully shielded against this and similar objections is a question that is beyond the limited scope of this paper. Here, I have been aiming for a more limited target. My main goal, to begin with, has been to motivate Weak Non-Evidentialism in light of the dilemma explained in the first section of the paper, and to offer some new reasons for the claim that Evidentialism is not suited, in particular, to account for perceptual justification. Secondly, I have pursued the goal of showing that Pryor's Dogmatism can coherently be interpreted as an internalist Weakly Non-Evidentialist position which in particular aims to account in

<sup>9</sup> Cases of *bad* cognitive penetration typically involve penetration by desire or unjustified belief. In a widely discussed case of the first kind, a gold prospector has a strong desire to find gold. This strong desire makes a yellow nugget perceptually seem gold to the prospector. According to many, the gold prospector's perceptual seeming has not the power to justify.

<sup>10</sup> For a clear presentation of on the cognitive penetration objection, see Siegel (2012) and Silins (2016) for an overview on the debate about this objection.

non-evidentialist terms for perceptual justification. Suffices, for the moment, to have hinted at the beginning of a plausible alternative explanation of why perceptual seemings are able to justify. This story can surely be refined, but this must wait for a different paper.

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