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Infinitism And Epistemic Normativity *

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Abstract. Klein's account of epistemic justification, infinitism, supplies a novel solution to the regress problem. We argue that concentrating on the normative aspect of justification exposes a number of unpalatable consequences for infinitism, all of which warrant rejecting the position. As an intermediary step, we develop a stronger version of the 'finite minds' objection.

Keywords: infinitism, epistemic responsibility, normativity, regress problem, Klein

Epistemically responsible agents face the difficult task of accepting only justified beliefs. As Peter Klein points out, taking seriously our epistemic responsibilities quickly leads to an infinite regress, since any belief is justified only if it is based on good reasons, and the beliefs serving as reasons also stand in need of justification, as do *those* beliefs serving as reasons, and so on (2007a, p. 5). This difficulty, the *regress problem*, threatens the possibility of an agent meeting any of her epistemic responsibilities.

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Klein's solution to the problem, infinitism, is that one is provisionally justified when there is an infinite, non-repeating chain of reasons for one's belief. His solution is *not* to stop the regress in its tracks (as foundationalists insist), nor it is to suggest that each belief is justified by its place within a network of beliefs (as coherentists insist). Rather, the infinitist embraces the infinite regress by suggesting that it does not pose a genuine problem.

While there is much to be admired in Klein's view, we are concerned that infinitism cannot adequately account for one's epistemic responsibilities. More specifically, we shall argue that infinitism cannot account for the normative feature of epistemic responsibility. Our case against infinitism proceeds from the assumption that epistemically responsible agents *ought* only maintain justified beliefs. (Since Klein himself makes this assumption, there is no need for providing a full-fledged theory of epistemic responsibility here. In order to be as charitable as possible to Klein, we shall give a weak reading of this idea.) Along with this assumption, we appeal to a weakened version of the commonly held view that one ought to act (or think) thus-and-so implies that one can, at least sometimes, do so. We should expect, then, a similar relationship between one's epistemic commitments (the 'ought') and capabilities (the 'can'). But there is good reason to think, as we shall argue, that on the infinitist view, one cannot ever meet one's responsibilities. This denial of the epistemic 'can' comes in the form of a strengthened version of the *finite minds objection*.

The typical formulation of the objection is that a person cannot have infinitely many reasons at one time, given that humans have finite minds.¹ We suggest that, though Klein has adequately addressed this

worry as originally stated, a stronger version of the objection lurks in the background (what shall be called the *finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection*).² By developing this objection, we argue that Klein's view commits him to one of a number of unpalatable consequences, depending on how beliefs are *based* on reasons. However Klein proposes to cash out the epistemic 'can', his account suffers from debilitating problems. Since Klein cannot furnish this 'can', our epistemic responsibilities fall to the wayside—an unacceptable result. Therefore, infinitism should be rejected.

1. Infinitism and Epistemic Responsibility

It is widely held that *justification* is a normative notion.³ It is also commonly maintained that the normative feature of justification serves as a constraint on any acceptable theory of the notion (e.g., Chisholm 1977; Sellars 1956). Though there is less agreement about the nature of this normativity, one important sense stands out: namely, that an *epistemically responsible* agent ought to form only justified beliefs (e.g., Bonjour 1980; Kornblith 1983). The role of responsibility suggests the presence of action-guiding norms, such as obligations and permissions. Admittedly, though, there are a number of different respects in which justification might be normative without implying an 'ought'. For instance, Pollock (1985) outlines one respect in which justification is action-guiding by focusing on epistemic permissions. Nevertheless, since the ordinary sense accorded to 'responsibility' (on which the epistemic notion relies) is tied to respect for how one ought to act, it is quite

plausible to assume that justification implies an ‘ought’ insofar as it is a kind of epistemic responsibility.

For any view on which only justified beliefs can provide justificatory support (for other beliefs), an epistemically responsible agent faces the *regress problem* in epistemology. One’s belief that p , to avoid being arbitrarily held, must be justified by some reason r_1 . But in order for r_1 to be able to justify p , it must be justified by some reason r_2 , and so on. It appears that we face an infinite regress, and unless there is some acceptable way to address this regress, it appears that no belief within that chain of reasons is left justified.⁴ In short, taking seriously our epistemic responsibilities requires justifying our beliefs, but doing so requires an infinite regress. As such, it is unclear how one could meet one’s epistemic responsibilities. As Klein suggests:

A key notion here is, of course, ‘epistemic responsibility.’ It is an unabashed normative notion. And that is as it should be since the regress problem is about what kind of reasoning can satisfy the norms of epistemic responsibility. (2007a, p. 5)

The debate about epistemic justification and the regress problem has, until very recently, been a debate between foundationalists, who believe that there are non-inferentially justified basic beliefs whose justification transmits to other beliefs, and coherentists, who maintain that no beliefs are justified non-inferentially, and that a belief is justified when it is a member of a coherent system. Klein’s own alternative, infinitism, is that one is provisionally justified when there is an infinite, non-repeating chain of reasons for one’s belief. Instead of stopping the regress in its tracks (as foundationalists insist), or distributing the

regress phenomena over a network of beliefs (as coherentists insist), the infinitist embraces the infinite regress by suggesting that it does not pose a genuine problem and insisting that, properly understood, justification actually requires infinite justificatory regresses.

The plausibility of Klein's solution to the regress problem depends, in part, on a shift away from the typical conception of reasons and how they relate to justification. Instead of holding that one can, if one accumulates sufficient reasons, be fully justified, Klein maintains that the best one can hope to do is to be *provisionally* justified. The degree of provisional justification increases with each reason back in the infinite, non-repeating chain one *actually* obtains. As such, one need not have in hand an infinite number of reasons (Klein 2007a, p. 10). Rather, Klein requires only that those reasons be *available* to the epistemic agent.

Klein has employed two different (though related) ways of articulating the notion of *availability*. In his (1999), Klein says that a reason is available when one has either a disposition to believe the reason, or has a second-order disposition to form a disposition to believe the reason. And in his (2007a), Klein says that a reason, p , is available to an epistemic agent, S , just in case:

[T]here is an epistemically credible way of S 's coming to believe that p given S 's current epistemic practices. Available propositions to S are like money in S 's bank account that is available to S if S has some legal way of withdrawing it even if S is unaware that the money is there or takes no steps to withdraw it. (2007a, p. 13)

This way of understanding a reason's availability seems to be a way of better characterizing the dispositional view. For there being a way

of coming to believe something seems just to mean that one has a disposition to believe something in certain epistemically credible circumstances or a (second-order) disposition to form that belief. If one did not have a (first or second-order) disposition to believe something in any circumstances, it is difficult to see how there could be a way for one to believe it. As such, we shall understand Klein's view about the availability of reasons in dispositional terms.

One benefit of Klein's conception of the availability of reasons is that it does not require a particular view on what makes one proposition a reason for another. But Klein does seem to take a stand on an important issue related to one's having reasons: what it is for one's belief to be *based* on a reason. The epistemic basing relation is the connection between one's beliefs and one's reasons. Put roughly, the reasons on which a belief is based are the reasons *for which* one holds the belief. In his (2005b), Klein says that "infinetism holds that a particular belief is doxastically justified (at least to some degree) only if there is an available reason and we cite that reason as a reason for our belief" (p. 26). In response to a challenge from Michael Bergmann (2007), however, Klein is willing to allow that a belief be based on a reason when the reason causes (in an appropriate way) the belief.

In the sections that follow, we shall raise objections to infinitism which turn, to some extent, on the relationship between Klein's view of available reasons and the basing relation (especially in §3). So it is worth spending some time getting clear about what is at stake over the basing relation. Perhaps the most well developed account of the basing relation is due to Keith Korch (2000). According to Korch, one's belief is based on some reason just in case either the belief was caused by the

reason, or one has a meta-belief to the effect that the reason is a good reason for holding the belief.⁵ If we understand Klein's requirement that an agent cite his reason (as a reason) in terms of the agent's having a meta-belief that the reason is a good one (as suggested in his (2007a)), then Korcz's account of the basing relation seems to capture what Klein is willing to allow for basing (given his concession to Bergmann).⁶ So for the purposes of this discussion, the infinitist will be taken to understand basing as Korcz articulates it.

One might worry that we are unfairly saddling Klein with a particular view of the basing relation. However, this worry would be misplaced for two reasons. The first is that we have motivated Klein's tacit acceptance of Korcz's account. Klein seems to think that meta-beliefs can establish basing, and he is willing to allow (in response to Bergmann) that a causal connection can establish basing. This just seems to be Korcz's view. The second reason the worry is misplaced is that Korcz's view is the most permissive account of basing in the literature. Other accounts of basing allow one or the other of Korcz's disjuncts, but not both. At the very least, if infinitism requires some other account of basing, it is incumbent on the infinitist to say what that account is.

One final clarification is in order. With the notion of the basing relation in place, we may now consider the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification. A proposition may be justified for a person even if the person does not believe the proposition. This type of justification concerns how one's evidence relates to some proposition (whether the person believes that proposition or not). Doxastic justification concerns whether a belief the person actually holds is justified by the reasons on which it is *based*. So one way to think about the

relationship between these two types of justification is that doxastic justification results from adding the basing relation to propositional justification. This distinction is important for understanding Klein's view. He suggests that:

Infinitism is committed to an account of *propositional justification* such that a proposition, p , is justified for S *iff* there is an endless series of non-repeating propositions available to S such that beginning with p , each succeeding member is a reason for the immediately preceding one. It is committed to an account of *doxastic justification* such that a belief is doxastically justified for S *iff* S has engaged in tracing the reason in virtue of which the proposition p is justified far forward enough to satisfy the contextually determined requirements. (2007a, p. 11, emphasis in original).

In the sections that follow, we take issue with Klein's account: our principal worry is that, even with the impressive apparatus available to him, infinitism is inadequate to accommodate the normative feature of justification.

2. Problematizing Infinitism

We shall argue that a tension arises for infinitism, between what one *ought* to do and what one *can* do, so far as justification is concerned. The basic shape of our argument follows. Since *justification* is a normative notion, it implies an 'ought'. And that one ought to act (or think) thus-and-so implies that one can do so.⁷ Unless we can make sense of how one can, as a matter of principle, engage in *any* given instance

of this process, we lose sight of our epistemic responsibilities. In §2.1, we argue that a strengthened version of an objection already raised against infinitism (the finite minds objection), aimed at *propositional justification* and *availability*, eliminates the relevant ‘can’.⁸ And in §2.2, we argue that the success of this objection (from §2.1) renders infinitism incapable of accommodating the normative feature of justification *qua* epistemic responsibility. In short, we shall use a strengthened version of the finite minds objection to serve as the basis for our deeper *normativity objection*. Finally, in §3, we address the infinitist’s suggestion that, even if propositional justification is problematic for capturing the epistemic ‘can’, *doxastic justification* might serve the infinitist’s needs. In that section, we argue that, even if Klein’s emphasis on doxastic justification avoids the finite minds objection, it proves too restrictive as an account of justification. Thus, Klein’s infinitism faces problems at every turn.

2.1. THE FINITE AND LESS-THAN-IDEALLY-ORDERED MINDS OBJECTION

At first blush, it appears that anyone attempting to justify the belief that p must cite the infinite sequence of reasons issuing from p . Yet human minds are finite so that one could not possibly hold an infinite number of beliefs; and having a finite life span precludes citing each reason in the sequence. As such, one could not ever be fully justified in holding a belief. This objection, typically referred to as the *finite minds objection*, has been discussed by Klein a number of times (e.g., Klein 1999; Klein 2005a; Klein 2007a).

How we have articulated Klein's view suggests his response. First, Klein agrees that on his view one cannot be fully justified, and he embraces this result. All that we can hope for, according to Klein, is provisional doxastic justification sufficient to meet the demands set by a particular conversational context. For any such case, we ought to cite a series of reasons until we reach a reasonable place for ending an inquiry supplied by the epistemic context (akin to reaching what Wittgenstein (1969) calls 'hinge propositions').

Secondly, Klein maintains that the notion of *availability* (which is built into the notion of propositional justification) allows that, at *every* step in the chain of reasons there is a reason to be cited and, in some sense, one is disposed to do so. Though one might not presently possess the (first-order) disposition to believe that which may be cited as a reason, one nevertheless possesses the second-order disposition to form that belief. This view of *available* reasons, with its emphasis on epistemically credible first and second-order dispositions, aids in avoiding the finite minds objection by making clear that the objection is based on the (mistaken) presumption that justification requires possession of an infinite number of beliefs. Moreover, Klein's position keeps its distinctively infinitist flavor by maintaining that there is an infinite non-repeating chain of reasons, *any* given member of which is, in some respect, available to an agent. In short, Klein insists that, "We don't have to traverse infinitely many steps on the endless path. There just must be such a path and we have to traverse as many as contextually required" (2007a, p. 13).

Though we are sympathetic to Klein's suggestion that justification is an ongoing process and that there is, "always a further step that

can be taken should we become dissatisfied with the point at which we stopped the progress of inquiry," (Klein 2007a) there is reason to doubt that the position, as Klein puts it, can be maintained easily. For as we shall argue, though Klein's response is adequate against the traditional form of the finite minds objection, it is not similarly effective against the version that follows.

The problem we point out is *not* that a finite agent cannot hold an infinite number of beliefs, nor is it that a finite agent cannot hold a particular belief about the order of an infinite number of beliefs. Rather, our concern is that, for many cases, a finite agent cannot hold a belief that stands in the proper place within a sequence of reasons, so as to serve as an *available* reason in the sense that Klein requires. That is, Klein's infinitism requires that *every step* in the infinite sequence of reasons must be *available* to an agent. Our strategy is to undermine Klein's reliance on second-order dispositions (to form beliefs as reasons) by arguing that there is a new finitude objection that applies to second-order dispositions as well. (This version of the objection shall be called the *finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection*.) This objection is meant to show that not every reason in a particular infinite series is available to a given subject.

For the sake of argument, we grant Klein that, for a belief that p , that there might exist the right sorts of justificatory links between p and an infinite, non-repeating chain of reasons $r_1...r_n$, even if that sequence is not entirely easily accessible to S . To use Klein's (2007a) bank account metaphor, there might exist a bank account containing an infinite amount of money. However, this does not guarantee the possibility that we can supply the right sort of legal means for with-

drawing funds from it, at least not to the extent required in order to satisfy S 's needs. After all, our interest in any given belief here is to act as a *reason* for some other belief. Though S might have the second-order disposition to form the belief that p which serves as a reason r_i , citing r_i as a reason for another belief depends on being already epistemically situated in the right place within the sequence of $r_1 \dots r_n$. This requires sensitivity to the *order* within the sequence of beliefs that the cited reason resides, not just that one has a given belief. If each transaction were a token of the same type, we might make sense of the same (second-order) disposition to form beliefs being manifested in a variety of justificatory contexts. But transactions from this account do not share such a resemblance. Unlike many financial transactions, each epistemic transaction (i.e., citing a reason) depends on making another one, and *that* transaction depends on making another one, and so on. One cannot make an arbitrary transaction, breaking into the sequence without having made the transactions leading up to the entry point, and expect to benefit from the justificatory work (i.e., epistemic transactions) that led to that point. Instead, each transaction depends on its place within the sequence.

That any given epistemic transaction depends on its place within a chain of reasons throws doubt on S possessing second-order dispositions to form beliefs to cite as reasons for *every* given place in that chain. For many such epistemic transactions ultimately outstrip S 's finite capabilities. It is not just that S does not have the opportunity to manifest second-order dispositions past some distant place in the chain of reasons. Most links in an infinite chain of reasons could not be cited within the course of S 's lifetime. Hypotheses about the immortality of

the soul aside, S does not possess any dispositions to act beyond her lifetime.⁹ And there are plenty of cases, at the borders of one's finite capabilities, where one possesses the wrong dispositions. Faced with an infinite chain of reasons to cite, it is more likely that, at some point along the chain, S has the disposition offer a guess or become bored with the whole enterprise (instead of having the epistemically credible disposition to continue citing reasons). There is good reason to think, then, that for a great many cases, S does not possess the relevant second-order dispositions whatsoever.¹⁰ So the finite minds problem originally aimed at S and her first-order dispositions to hold any given belief can also be raised for the relevant second-order dispositions.

2.2. THE NORMATIVITY OBJECTION

The finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection serves as the basis for our deeper worry: that infinitism cannot sustain the normative feature of justification. To establish this conclusion, we take seriously Klein's (2007a) insistence that justification, as a kind of epistemic responsibility, is a normative notion. As such, agents ought to form beliefs by epistemically respectable means. This requires that, *at least sometimes*, one is able to act in a certain way. If one *cannot ever* act in a way so as to meet one's epistemic responsibilities, it is very difficult to see in what way the notion associated with one's behavior is normative. So we maintain that if one ought to form beliefs in a particular way, then it must in principle be possible for such a being to form beliefs in that way. (This weakened version of the slogan 'ought implies can' should

suffice to secure our conclusion while avoiding most of the objections to stronger versions of the principle.)

Given this understanding of normativity, when one ought to justify the belief that p , it has to be the case that, at least sometimes, one can do so. And as already argued, for most of the members of any infinite chain of reasons, one's finite nature precludes citing most of those reasons, or even possessing the second-order disposition to do so. Therefore, one is *not* responsible for justifying any given belief. Without the right capabilities, epistemic responsibilities fall to the wayside. Clearly, this is an unacceptable result. While Ginet (rightly or wrongly) argues that, if infinitism is true, then no beliefs are justified (Ginet 2005, p. 148), we argue that, if the thesis is true, then we are always epistemically blameless.

In response to this objection, one might maintain that what has been illustrated so far is that the way Klein thinks of normativity is the cuprit, not infinitism. Suppose that Klein acknowledged that his view had the consequence that we are always epistemically blameless. In order to avoid this consequence, suppose he endorsed some other understanding of epistemic normativity—one that *does not* involve citing reasons. Infinitism, per se, would then be immune to the normativity objection developed above.

While it would be immune to the normativity objection, it would still fall to the finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection. In order to make sense of how an infinite string of reasons could justify a proposition *for us*, Klein needs for it to be possible *for us* to be able to follow such a string. Regardless of how we understand epistemic normativity, we have been urging that this is impossible *given our cognitive*

resources. Klein has failed to appreciate that it is not only the finitude of our minds that is at issue. It is also how well-ordered they are. And while this led to the normativity objection, it is an independent issue for the infinitist.

3. The Doxastic Fix?

So much for the notion of an *available reason* in Klein's account, and the difficulty it poses for capturing the normative feature of justification. But one might still wonder whether Klein's emphasis on doxastic justification aids in avoiding our concerns. Consider, for instance, Klein's response to Bergmann on the (original) finite minds objection:

The crucial point was that although propositional justification requires that there be an infinite path of non-repeating reasons, in order for a belief to be (at least partially) doxastically justified, it is not required that *S* possess that infinite set of reasons or that a belief be based upon beliefs that have the infinite set of reasons as their propositional contents. However, it is required that some of those reasons be available and that the belief be based upon those beliefs that have the available reasons as their contents. In other words, by distinguishing between propositional and doxastic justification the so-called 'finite mind problem' would disappear. (2007b, pp. 26–27)

If this response is adequate for the original finite minds objection, is it adequate for the finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection? Recall that our objection has it that even if we could have (second-

order) dispositions to form beliefs that serve as reasons, the infinitist needs those dispositions to be *properly ordered*, which is implausible for an infinite chain of reasons. But surely, the infinitist might respond: it is not at all implausible for one to have properly ordered dispositions to meet the finite and often meager demands of doxastic justification.

In what follows, we shall argue that there are two problems with Klein's supposed *doxastic fix* to the finite minds problem, both stemming from how the infinitist might understand the epistemic basing relation. Recall that, in §1, we suggested that Klein seems to endorse something like Korcz' account of the basing relation. According to that view, a belief can be based on a reason if one has a meta-belief that the reason is a good reason for holding the belief, or if there is an appropriate causal connection between the reason and the belief. As we shall argue, on either account of the basing relation, reasons cannot play their proper role. Klein's account, when understanding epistemic basing as holding the right meta-beliefs, rules out unsophisticated epistemic agents' justified beliefs; and Klein's account, when taking basing to be a causal matter, fails to allow causally based reasons to do any justificatory work. In short, Klein's account of justification is too restrictive. (Note, though, that these problems do not arise for the infinitist *qua* infinitist. Rather, they arise from Klein's requirement on doxastic justification that one *cite* one's reasons.)

To see the problem causal basing raises for Klein, consider the following case.¹¹ Suppose that Nick and David have been in their offices all day, and David goes to Nick's office to ask whether Nick would like to get a beer after a long day at work. Suppose that Nick's answer depends on the weather. Also suppose that earlier, David looked at the weather

report online, which said that there would be no rain that evening. David believes that it is not going to rain because he saw the weather forecast online. Suppose that, instead of going to talk to Nick, David went outside to check the weather for himself. We may imagine that David is generally reliable about whether there is going to be rain, even though he does not exactly appreciate why he is reliable. Now, suppose that both his seeing what the weather is like and the online forecast causally sustain his belief that there is not going to be rain. When he goes in to ask Nick about going out, suppose Nick asks whether it is going to rain. David replies, "No, the online weather report called for clear skies." Suppose Nick then asks, "Which weather report did you use? Is it reliable?" To which David responds, "Yes, I used the one from the local news, which tends to be very reliable." Nick is thereby satisfied, and they go have their drink.

Recall that Klein says, "infinitism holds that a particular belief is doxastically justified (at least to some degree) only if there is an available reason and we cite that reason as a reason for our belief" (2007b, p. 26). David's belief that there will not be rain seems to be justified on the basis of two distinct bodies of reason: his checking the weather online and his experiencing the weather first-hand (and we may assume that the evidence David has is, in fact, part of an infinite, non-repeating chain of reasons that justify the proposition David believes). But recall that David does not understand how his experiencing the weather constitutes a reason for thinking it will not rain. We may suppose that he has a meta-belief to the extent that his experiencing the weather is why he believes that it will not rain, but that he *lacks* a meta-belief about whether this is a *good reason* for

thinking it will rain.¹² He understands, roughly, that he has oftentimes been right in the past, and that there is a good inductive inference for his being right this time, but he is simply too lazy to work through all of that. So suppose he avoids tracing that line of reasons. Then, according to Klein's infinitism, David is not justified on the basis of experiencing the weather. There is a reason available to David, but he would not cite it. Thus, the infinitist must say he gains no provisional justification from those reasons. But this seems incorrect. Surely those reasons play a role in how well justified David's belief is.

More generally, any time S has more than one *set* of reasons (R_1 and R_2 , say), any of which would justify S 's belief that p , Klein is committed to maintaining that only those S would cite can justify S 's belief. So if S would not cite the members of R_2 because one is too lazy, or due to any other psychological issue, then R_2 cannot play a justificatory role for S . This seems to be the wrong result, since features of S 's situation unrelated to S 's justificatory status ought not preclude R_2 from playing that role for S . Thus, adding a causal basing requirement renders Klein's account too restrictive in that it does not allow all of one's reasons to play a justificatory role.

One might respond by suggesting that this example fails to appreciate the contextualist aspect of Klein's account. In a context in which the standards are low, David's other reasons will play no role in determining whether he is justified, since his evidence from the weather report was sufficient for his belief to be justified. So the fact that his having experienced the weather plays no role should not be cause for alarm.

The problem with this response is that it misses the point of the example. Even in a context with low standards, one can have reasons beyond those that satisfy the standards. Klein's account of doxastic justification fails to allow those reasons that causally sustain one's belief but one would not cite as reasons to *play any role*. Thus, his account is too restrictive when a causal connection is allowed to establish the basing relation.

Perhaps, then, Klein should simply require meta-beliefs for basing. Unfortunately, this is restrictive in another way. Meta-beliefs that establish the basing relation are beliefs that a reason is a *good* reason for holding a particular belief. But there are epistemic agents who have justified beliefs *despite* lacking the concepts required for such meta-beliefs. For instance, many adults have justified beliefs, yet lack an understanding of what a "good reason" is.¹³ Giving up on unsophisticated believers having justified beliefs is too high a price to pay to save infinitism. Thus, if only meta-beliefs could establish basing, Klein's account would be too restrictive.¹⁴

Klein suggests that his distinction between propositional and doxastic justification helps to avoid the finite minds objection. But once we appreciate the need for the basing relation in his account, we realize that his view is overly restrictive. Either it fails to allow causally based reasons to do any justificatory work, or it rules out unsophisticated epistemic agents' justified beliefs. And either way, Klein's attempt to avoid the finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds problem fails.

4. Conclusion

Peter Klein's infinitism, we have argued, suffers from a number of defects. Understanding his account of propositional justification leads to the finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection, which motivates the normativity objection. We noted that Klein might adopt a different way of thinking about epistemic normativity (in terms other than epistemic responsibility) to avoid the normativity objection, but he would still have to face our strengthened finite minds objection. Moreover, his attempt to avoid that objection by distinguishing between propositional and doxastic justification as he does leads to further problems, given his concession to Bergmann on the basing relation. We conclude that infinitism should be rejected.

Notes

¹Infinitism has already been met with a number of other objections (Bergmann 2007; Cling 2004; Ginet 2005; Turri 2007), which Klein has admirably addressed. For present purposes, we do not address any of them.

²See also Aikin's (2005) treatment of versions of the finite minds objection.

³For a dissenting view, see Richard Fumerton's (2001)

⁴Separate versions of the regress problem may be raised for *being justified* and *being able to identify justifications* (e.g., Simson 1986, pp. 180-1). It is not entirely clear how Klein's own conception of the issue relates to this distinction, though it oftentimes appears that he focuses on the former version of the problem. Nevertheless, the criticisms we raise of Klein's position do not depend on settling this exegetical matter.

⁵This is a rough characterization of Korcz's admirably intricate account. The details of Korcz's account are not relevant to this discussion.

⁶Well worth noting is that a number of people maintain that an adequate account of the basing relation is to be understood *only* in causal terms. Bergmann seems to suggest this, Mittag (2002) suggests this, and Swain (1981) defends a purely causal account of basing.

⁷The principle that *ought implies can* is not uncontroversial. See, for instance, Sharon Ryan's (2003). The version of the principle we employ, however, is quite weak. It is weaker than any of the versions for which Ryan provides counter-examples. Moreover, only the principal objection raised depends on the assumption. The other objections raised in §2.1 and §3 stand even if one rejects our weakened principle that *ought implies can*.

⁸Ginet offers another means of eliminating this epistemic 'can', though he does so quite separately of normative considerations. He entertains this worry, directed at propositional justification, that we may only make sense of an infinite chain of available reasons on the condition that we have in hand a generalized manner for establishing the justificatory links between those reasons, such as an algorithm. Moreover, it is unlikely that such a thing can be given (Ginet 2005, p. 147).

⁹Note that these claims about one's finite dispositions are partially inspired by a similar suggestion made by Kripke (1982) while arguing against dispositional accounts of meaning. In his famous interpretation of Wittgenstein, Kripke suggests that agents like us do not possess many of the dispositions needed in order to ground the rules one follows. But whereas our objection to infinitism appeals to dispositions to form beliefs, Kripke focuses on dispositions of a non-intentional variety. From this, he argues that a standard dispositional account cannot ground the indefinite applications of rules (such as the one governing the use of '+') because the rules one follows (on a dispositional account) are to be read off one's dispositions and, for cases outstripping one's actual capabilities, one has no dispositions whatsoever to act. Therefore, there is no fact of the matter which rules one follows in extreme cases.

¹⁰In response to the claim that *S* does not possess whatsoever the dispositions required by Klein's account, one might be tempted to appeal to the dispositions possessed of idealized counterparts to ourselves. Were *S* under sufficiently *ideal* conditions (e.g., having infinite time, processing power, memory), then *S* would be disposed in the manner that Klein's account requires. Despite the initial plausibility of this suggestion, though, this is an unwarranted appeal to idealizations. For the regress problem is peculiar to finite agents *like us*. As such, suggesting an account of justification for our idealized counterparts does not serve as a solution to the regress problem for *us*, since the problem is distinctly raised for agents with our limited epistemic capabilities.

¹¹Note that the way in which the beliefs are causally based on reasons is *not* going to be that the reasons play a causal role in producing the beliefs. Very often, on Klein's view, one must have the belief before one possesses the reasons. So it seems that the reasons must causally sustain the belief, and this is how the belief is causally based on them.

¹²Notice, this is not to say that David has a meta-belief that experiencing the weather is *not* a good reason for thinking it will rain.

¹³This worry is raised by Korcz (2000, p. 536). See also Schmitt, 2001, pp. 184-185.

¹⁴Klein says that the kind of knowledge of interest to him is "knowledge that results from carefully examining our beliefs in order to determine which, if any, deserve to be maintained" (2007a, p. 4). Even if we adopt this view of knowledge/justification, Klein's account is too restrictive. Imagine a case in which one clearly has a justified belief, in virtue of having all of the right evidence, even though one has not carefully worked through all of it. For instance, imagine that one sees roughly how their evidence will provide an argument, without seeing each step in the argument yet. Such a person seems to be justified in Klein's sense, yet lacks the requisite meta-beliefs. Cases like this show that Klein's account of doxastic justification is too restrictive if it requires meta-beliefs for basing.

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