On Divorcing the Rational and the Justified

Abstract

Many epistemologists treat rationality and justification as the same thing. Those who don't lack detailed accounts of the difference, leading their opponents to suspect that the distinction is an *ad hoc* attempt to safeguard their theories of justification. In this paper, I offer a new and detailed account of the distinction. The account is inspired by no particular views in epistemology, but rather by insights from the literature on reasons and rationality outside of epistemology. Specifically, it turns on a version of the familiar distinction in meta-ethics between possessing *apparent* normative reasons (which may be merely apparent) and possessing *objective* normative reasons. The paper proceeds as follows. In §1, I discuss the history of indifference to the distinction between rationality and justification in epistemology and the striking contrast with meta-ethics. I introduce the distinction between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons in §2 and provide a deeper basis for it in §3. I explain how the ideas extend to epistemology in §4 and explore the upshots for some central issues in §5.

1   Introduction

1.1   A History of Indifference

Examples abound of epistemologists treating rationality and justification as the same thing. In a classic attack on reliabilism, Stewart Cohen tells us:

'[R]easonable' and 'rational' are virtual synonyms for 'justified'.[1]

Michael Huemer writes:

Another word for what is justified...is 'rational'.[2]

Somewhat more cautiously, Richard Fumerton says:

The metaepistemological project I am interested in concerns the concept of justified or rational belief.... [T]he expression 'rational' might be somewhat less misleading than the expression 'justified', but I will continue to use the two terms interchangeably....[3]

There are more recent examples. Sinan Dogramaci writes:

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[1] Cohen (1984: 283).

[2] Huemer (2001: 22).

[3] Fumerton (1995: 19); a search for 'rational' in the index yields: 'Rational belief. *See* justified belief'.

Rationality, justification, reasonableness: same thing. Use whichever word you like.[4]

And in a recent defense of the accessibility of justification, Declan Smithies tells us:

> To say that one has justification to believe a proposition is to say that it is rational or reasonable for one to believe it.[5]

The indifference also arises in less explicit ways. Often it surfaces in expressions like "rationality or justification", as used in the following sentence from Ralph Wedgwood:

> I propose that it is a necessary condition on the rationality or justification of your current enduring belief-states that they should meet certain conditions of coherence.[6]

Just do a Google search for "rationality or justification" or "justification or rationality". You get many hits. Revealingly, most are from epistemologists in different generations who are treating the verbal difference as marking no real distinction.

1.2 Why Indifference Is Striking

The indifference would be unremarkable if it were paralleled in other normative subdisciplines. But it isn't. In ethics, many doubt whether the fact that it is rational for S to ϕ entails that there are truly good reasons for S to ϕ. Many defend views on which the entailment fails. Derek Parfit, for example, holds that rationality consists in correctly responding to *apparent* normative reasons, where "apparent" is not a success term: "We ought rationally to respond to apparent reasons even if...these reasons are not real."[7] And Parfit's view is just one member of a family of views that analyze rationality in terms of apparent or subjective normative reasons, in contrast to objective normative reasons.[8] On many views, an apparent normative reason is not a special kind of objective normative reason.[9]

Other meta-ethicists doubt that there are always genuine reasons to comply with requirements of rationality. John Broome writes: "I doubt that, necessarily, we ought to satisfy each of the individual requirements of rationality. Indeed, I doubt that, necessarily, we have any reason to satisfy each of these requirements."[10] And Niko Kolodny argues that there is no genuine reason to be rational *as such*, debunking intuitions to the contrary with an error theory. This error theory rests essentially on an account of rationality on which it consists in heeding what *appear to be* good reasons.[11]

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[4]Dogramaci (2015: 777).

[5]Smithies (2012: 274).

[6]Wedgwood (2012: 280).

[7]Parfit (2011: 111).

[8]See also Parfit (2001), Schroeder (2008, 2009, 2011) and Way (2009).

[9]One exception is Lord (2010), whose view I'll discuss in §2. Reflections on Lord's view provide the basis for my distinction between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons.

[10]Broome (2005: 321).

[11]See Kolodny (2005), whose view was inspired by Scanlon (1998).

Admittedly, no discontinuity between epistemology and ethics follows *immediately* from these observations. This is because talk of justification is somewhat uncommon in contemporary ethics. Normative reasons have become the most popular currency for cashing out normative claims. When one asks what normative reasons are supposed to be, one usually hears that they are considerations that *count in favor* of acts or attitudes.

Still, many ethicists would regard justification as going hand in hand with the possession of real rather than merely apparent normative reasons. Normative reasons are often explicitly agreed to be the kinds of things which can help to justify our attitudes and acts if we possess them. Indeed, many people use the motivating/normative distinction interchangeably with the motivating/justifying distinction.[12]

Moreover, the main context in which talk of justification arises in contemporary ethics is when people are distinguishing between justifications and excuses. In recent work, distinctions involving reasons draw the line. John Gardner, for example, treats justifications for ϕ-ing as consisting in normative reasons to ϕ and excuses for ϕ-ing as consisting not in normative reasons to ϕ but rather in the appearance that there were reasons to ϕ.[13]

Now, there was a time when excuses were understood merely as *denials of responsibility*.[14] But this was a mistake. Excuses can express our responsibility, by showing that we rationally reacted to the sadly misleading appearance that there were justifying reasons. As Gardner writes, "in this respect the action remains rational, and the agent who offers it claims rational competence. And this, in turn, is where an excuse differs fundamentally from a denial of responsibility."[15] But a difference with justification remains, because

> it is one thing to have a reason to defend oneself and quite another to have every reason to believe that one has a reason to defend oneself that in reality one does not have (e.g. because one strayed accidentally and without warning onto the set of an action movie).... In that case the most we can hope for is an excuse.[16]

Gardner's points address internalists who insist that the distinction between justification and blamelessness cannot explain away their intuitions.[17] Crucially, excusability is *more than blamelessness*. It is a positive status—indeed, a product of the same competences

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[12]Lenman (2009) provides an overview of the literature on the motivating/normative contrast that uses the phrase "justifying reason" instead of "normative reason". Before the 2000s, this was more common. Dancy (2000: 6–7) takes exception to the identification of normative and justifying reasons, but he seems to be relying on the dialectical sense of "justify" in this passage—a sense that epistemologists often avoid.

[13]Gardner (2007). Littlejohn (2009, 2012, forthcoming) also draws on Gardner.

[14]See, e.g., Hart (1968).

[15]Gardner (2007: 86). Littlejohn (forthcoming) defends a version of Gardner's point with respect to epistemic excuses.

[16]Gardner (2007: 87). In saying that Gardner understands the excuse/justification distinction in terms of the apparent/real reason distinction, I mean only that for Gardner, excuses coincide extensionally with apparent reasons on one natural enough account of apparent reasons; Gardner does not himself use the phrase "apparent reasons". Now, I wouldn't analyze apparent reasons in terms of considerations that it is rational for us to believe are genuine reasons, but I don't think this view is indefensible extensionally (though I think it requires underintellectualizing possession of the concept of a reason to succeed).

[17]See especially Pryor (2001).

that enable us to correctly respond to objective normative reasons when conditions are favorable. But it can fall short of a real justification, since the fact that one's reason appears to be objectively good doesn't always guarantee that it is objectively good.

1.3 Why Resisting Indifference Matters

The mismatch between ethics and epistemology might be worth ignoring if nothing in epistemology turned on it. But this is not the case. Among other things, the distinction proves important for debates between internalists and externalists about justification in epistemology just as it proved important for debates between internalists and externalists about normative reasons in meta-ethics.

Consider a watershed moment in meta-ethics to see the resemblance. T. M. Scanlon was one of the first to distinguish between rationality and correctly responding to genuine normative reasons. The distinction played a significant role in his response to Bernard Williams's rejection of externalism about normative reasons. Williams famously said:

> There are...many things that a speaker may say to one who is not disposed to ϕ when the speaker thinks that he should be, as that he is inconsiderate, or cruel, or selfish, or imprudent; or that things, and he, would be a lot nicer if he were so motivated.... But one who makes a great deal out of putting the criticism in the form of an external reason statement seems concerned to say that what is particularly wrong with the agent is that he is *irrational.*

Scanlon replied: "Williams is quite right that this claim would be implausible, but wrong...to hold that his opponent is committed to it."[18] Wrong, Scanlon insists, because it needn't be *irrational* to fail to respond to good reasons if the quality of these reasons is not apparent. Williams's internalist strictures might apply to factors that it would be irrational not to heed. But the externalist's theory need not concern these factors.

This thought has become common among externalists in meta-ethics. It is no surprise that the resurgence of externalism has been matched by a wave of skepticism about the significance of rationality. One way to put a nail in the internalist coffin is to agree that internalists are right about rationality but to deny that rationality matters as such. The absence of similar thoughts in epistemology is striking—especially striking if we recall the passage that follows my opening quote from Cohen:

> If the Reliabilist wants to distinguish 'justified' from 'reasonable' or 'rational' he may do so. But clearly the important epistemic concept, the one epistemologists have been concerned with, is what the Reliabilist would call 'reasonability' or 'rationality'.

Reliabilists would do well to mimic Scanlon and dispute both parts of the last sentence. Grant to Cohen that rationality can come apart from reliability, and that it can thwart

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[18]Scanlon (1998: 27).

the fundamental epistemic goal of believing truly. One could then ask: "Why not take this to show that rationality lacks importance as such from the epistemic point of view?" One could push further: "Why think this concept is "the one epistemologists have been concerned with" in giving theories of justification?" 'Justification' is often stipulatively defined by its role in JTB+ theories of knowledge. It is hardly clear that rationality will be fit to play this role if we understand it on its own terms.

So, the distinction between rationality and justification is not merely a pedantic one. It matters if it resembles the distinction drawn in meta-ethics. The parallel distinction in meta-ethics marked a triumph for externalists. If externalists are right about normative reasons, the internalists' *idée fixe* arguably has derivative significance at best. Apparent reasons should attract as much underivative interest as apparent wealth. Externalists in epistemology could reasonably claim that internalists are looking for fool's gold unless they somehow merge clarity and distinctness of appearance with truth-conducivity.

1.4   Antecedents and the Need for Detail

Some epistemologists have been more careful than the ones I quoted at the outset. The only trouble is that these epistemologists have not given detailed accounts of what the rationality/justification distinction is supposed to be. This invites Cohen's worry that the distinction is merely a way to save their theories of justification from counterexamples.

Goldman (1986: 27), for example, writes:

> I will not attempt to analyze...all terms of epistemic evaluation. The salient omission here is rationality, which has figured prominently in epistemology.

Since Goldman spends several chapters giving a process reliabilist account of justification, he clearly acknowledges a distinction between justification and rationality. More recently, Alex Jackson (2011) and Clayton Littlejohn (2012) have relied on the distinction. Jackson relies on it in critiquing *seemings internalism* about justification. Littlejohn's project requires such a distinction, since he denies that there are justified false beliefs! Jackson and Littlejohn are aware of the meta-ethics literature on which I'm drawing. But neither offers a detailed account of how rationality and justification differ.[19]

Greater detail is needed. One reason is that the most common distinction in meta-ethics is between correctly responding to apparent reasons and correctly responding to *all*

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[19]Littlejohn (forthcoming) does offer a very sophisticated account of epistemic excuses, which bolsters a response to the new evil demon problem that he has been giving since his (2009). He does not, however, take excusability and rationality to be equivalent, which leaves one with questions both about how he understands rationality and about what he takes the role of rationality to be in capturing internalist intuitions.

Notice that one might in principle hold both that excusability and justification are inequivalent and that rationality and justification are equivalent. For this reason, attempting to solve the new evil demon problem by appealing to a justification/excuse distinction is not strategically the same as attempting to solve it by appealing to a justification/rationality distinction. These strategies should not be confused even if it is defensible to equate rationality and excusability—as I believe it is, unlike Littlejohn. I bring up excuses only to illustrate why justification plausibly entails having objective reasons. I take it that different arguments are then needed to separate rationality and justification.

the objective reasons in the world. But justification is not a function of *all* the objective reasons, if we follow meta-ethicists in taking these to include virtually any facts. It is at most a function of the objective reasons that one *possesses*. We need an argument that possessed objective reasons and apparent reasons are distinct.

Another reason why more care is needed is that many meta-ethicists understand rationality very narrowly. While they hold that rationality requires correctly responding to apparent reasons, many will understand 'apparent' in a *belief-relative* way and view this requirement as a coherence requirement. Epistemologists are unlikely to find this interesting. Coherentism about anything other than coherence is now widely rejected.[20]

This does not show that the meta-ethics literature is irrelevant or that the distinction can't be drawn. It just shows the need for greater detail and care—which I'll provide.

1.5 The Plan

Here is the plan. In §2, I explain which concepts from meta-ethics should be imported into epistemology. I use the distinction between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons to explain the distinction between *substantive* rationality and justification, and I separate both of these statuses from *structural* rationality.[21] In §3, I provide a deeper account of the distinction between apparent and possessed objective reasons that falls out of an account I've elsewhere given of the nature of apparent reasons.[22] In §4, I explain how my distinctions extend to epistemology and improve on prior attempts to bifurcate epistemic evaluation. In §5, I explore the implications for major issues in epistemology.

2 Objective Reasons, Possession, and Apparent Reasons

2.1 Objective Reasons and the Early Distinction

Much of the conceptual progress in recent meta-ethics owes to the way meta-ethicists have come to understand *normative reasons*. Since the late 1990s, it has been popular to view normative reasons as objective facts that count in favor of acts and attitudes. Such facts are not ones to which we necessarily have access. For example, the fact that the

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[20]Though see Worsnip (2015, forthcoming), who follows the 1990s-2000s tradition in meta-ethics (described further in §2.1) of understanding rationality purely in terms of coherence requirements, and who extends this view to epistemology. Now, it is not inconsistent with Worsnip's project to think that there is an intermediate status which could be stipulatively dubbed "substantive rationality" lying in between coherence and justification. Worsnip himself is, however, neutral on whether structural rationality contrasts only with justification or with both justification and some important intermediate status (as I would argue).

[21]I will not claim that there is no tight and important relation between structural and substantive rationality. Although I won't commit strongly to it in this paper, I am attracted to a view on which it is true that whenever someone violates a structural requirement, she has put herself in a position in which she is guaranteed to be failing to respond to the apparent reasons. I also suspect some such view is needed to explain the intuition that structural rationality matters (though only given a further account of how substantive rationality matters, along the lines of that sketched in the §6); cf. Kolodny (2007), Lord (2014), and Kiesewetter (ms).

[22]See [reference suppressed].

lemonade is arsenic-laced is a conclusive normative reason for one not to drink it even if one is unaware of this fact. Call reasons of this sort *objective reasons.*

What is the connection between these reasons and rationality? There is clearly no *direct* connection. It is not irrational to drink the lemonade if one cannot see that it is arsenic-laced. And it may be irrational for one to drink some lemonade even if it is not arsenic-laced but merely appears to be. So, a consideration P's being an objective reason to ϕ seems neither necessary nor sufficient for P to exert rational pressure to ϕ.

This fact initially led people in meta-ethics to distinguish between rational ϕ-ing and ϕ-ing that is supported by *all* the objective normative reasons. And when this distinction was first drawn, many meta-ethicists understood rationality very narrowly. The requirements of rationality got identified with coherence requirements such as:

(*Enkrasia*) Rationality requires that if you believe you ought to ϕ, you ϕ.[23]

(*Means-End*) Rationality requires that if you intend to E and believe that M-ing is a necessary means for E-ing, you intend to M.

In the early 2000s, it was popular to view 'rationality requires' as taking wide scope over the conditionals, so that these requirements could be complied with in several ways.[24] On this wide scope view, one could comply with Enkrasia by ϕ-ing or by dropping one's belief that one ought to ϕ. Even those who rejected the wide scope account agreed that the pressures of coherence are essentially *hypothetical* and *rationally escapable*, and differ from substantive pressures in this respect.[25] This picture led meta-ethicists to regard the key distinction as a distinction between *structural* and *substantive* evaluations.

The distinction between structural and substantive evaluations is important. But the contrast between the pressures of rationality and the pressures of objective reasons isn't fully captured by this distinction. For we cannot ground the pressures of all apparent reasons by appeal to coherence requirements. Consider:

(*) If it appears to you that there is arsenic in the glass, the apparent fact that there is arsenic in the glass is an apparent reason for you not to plan to drink from it.

Even if the perceptual appearance is misleading, it is *prima facie* irrational to ignore the apparent reason it provides. That is true regardless of whether one takes a doxastic stance on the presence of arsenic in the glass. So, (*) is not merely a descendant of Enkrasia.

Might one claim that appearances can always give *objective* reasons strong enough to explain the relevant rational pressure? Not plausibly. You might reside in an empty world being fed pure illusion by some demon. The appearances here bear no objective probabilistic relation to extra-mental facts. If so, they cannot provide serious objective reasons for beliefs about these facts in these worlds.

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[23] "Enkrasia" is John Broome's term; see, e.g., Broome (2013).

[24] Thanks to Broome (1999)'s influence. Schroeder (2004) and Kolodny (2005) marked a departure.

[25] See Lord (2011) for a lucid explanation of how a narrow scoper can capture these features.

Call the rationality that consists in heeding these apparent reasons "substantive" if you like. If you like, deny that it has anything in common with the structural rationality exhibited by compliance with Enkrasia and Means-End. Still, the rational pressure exerted by these apparent reasons is just as divorceable from the presence of objective reasons as the rational pressure exerted by coherence requirements.

2.2 Apparent Reasons vs. Possessed Objective Reasons

Some recent writers have appreciated this fact. Mark Schroeder has drawn attention to *subjective normative reasons*, which are the same things I am calling apparent reasons.[26] And Schroeder allows presentational mental states other than beliefs to ground possession of these reasons.[27] But he has also argued that these reasons are not just objective normative reasons to which we bear some privileged relation.[28]

Not everyone agrees with Schroeder. Some argue that apparent reasons are a proper subset of the objective reasons: they are the objective reasons *possessed* by the agent.[29] I do not think, however, that we should accept this view. The main problem for this view is the possibility of (unwittingly) objectively undercut or (unwittingly) disabled reasons. Remember that for some fact to be an objective reason for you to ϕ, certain other things need to be true; these other things are, as Dancy (2004) says, *enablers* of that fact's being a reason for you to ϕ. It is entirely possible (i) for the fact that p to be manifest to you, (ii) for p to appear to be an objective reason to ϕ, but (iii) unbeknownst to you, for the enablers on p's status as an objective reason to ϕ to fail to obtain (though they of course *seem* to obtain). In such cases, p is an apparent reason for you to ϕ even though p is not an objective reason for you to ϕ.[30] These cases are counterexamples to the view that facts that are apparent reasons to ϕ are always objective reasons to ϕ.

In the epistemic case, it is plausible that an objective probabilistic relation has to hold between the relevant reason-giving fact and the target belief in order for that fact to provide an objective reason for that belief. Indeed, I don't know what an objective reason for belief would be if it didn't have some connection to objective probability. But we can easily be deceived about the presence of this relation. When this relation appears to hold between the fact that p and the belief that q, the consideration that p will remain an apparent reason to believe q, and indeed one that makes it just as rational to believe q as it would be if the relation held, assuming no apparent defeaters emerge.

If this sounds question-begging, it is worth noting that there are equally clear but different kinds of examples of our phenomenon in the practical case. Note that the fact that you have promised to ϕ is plausibly an objective reason for you to plan to ϕ only if it is not impossible for you to ϕ. Having the ability to ϕ is, in other words, an enabling condition on a fact's giving one an objective reason to plan to ϕ. This is why there is no

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[26]See Schroeder (2007: Ch. 1) and (2008).
[27]See Schroeder (2011).
[28]See Schroeder (2008).
[29]See Lord (2010).
[30]I don't deny that you might have objective reasons to ϕ *other than p* in many such cases.

objective reason to plan to travel back in time to prevent the crusades, slavery, and World War II.[31] But we can be deceived about what we will be able to do, and more generally about the presence of enabling conditions of this stripe. Suppose Benedict promised to pick Margaret up from the airport tomorrow. Unbeknownst to him, some maniacs ensure that it will be impossible for him to pick up Margaret tomorrow by creating an impenetrable forcefield around his house tonight. Plausibly, the fact that one promised to ϕ at t can constitute an objective reason for one to plan to ϕ at t only if it is not impossible for one to ϕ at t. A fact of impossibility undercuts whatever objective reasons might have been provided by the good properties of some imagined choice. But before Benedict discovers the forcefield, the fact that he promised to pick Margaret up tomorrow remains an *apparent* reason for him to plan to go tomorrow. So, not all apparent reasons are objective reasons.

Some might insist that even if the consideration that explicitly motivates an agent to ϕ is not an objective reason to ϕ, the agent will possess other objective reasons to ϕ. But this strategy is inapplicable here. Any other reasons Benedict might have had to plan to go to the airport tomorrow are also objectively undercut by the fact of impossibility. Might it be claimed that there is a weak objective reason for Benedict to plan to go to the airport tomorrow? Not plausibly. The fact of impossibility is a total undercutting defeater. There is not even a weak objective reason to plan to travel back in time to prevent the crusades. Might Benedict have an objective reason to plan to go to the airport with zero weight? It is hard to see how this differs from our conclusion. A reason with no objective weight is not an objective reason. Accordingly, we should reject:

> *The Factoring Account of Apparent Reasons*: R is an apparent reason for S to ϕ iff R is an objective reason for S to ϕ, and it is apparent to S that R.[32]

Crucially, however, this does not show that there is nothing important that defenders of the Factoring Account are tracking. It only shows that possessing an apparent reason is not the same thing as possessing an objective reason.

We care about possessing objective reasons. It is not enough if there merely exists something that could objectively support us. We want to *receive* this support and *be poised to act on the basis of it*. And even if our acts and attitudes fall short of ideal correctness, we can have more than excuses. Imperfect conduct is not always unjustified. Possessing objective reasons matters because justification matters.

Now, possessing *some* objective reason to ϕ is not sufficient for having justification for ϕ-ing. One might possess stronger objective reasons on the other side. The fact that these objective reasons outweigh the objective reason to ϕ does not destroy that reason. Undercutting defeaters can destroy objective support relations, but to outweigh is not to destroy. So what does justification require? I suggest that to be justified in ϕ-ing is to possess an objective reason to ϕ and to possess no stronger objective reason for any specific alternative to ϕ-ing. Your ϕ-ing isn't thereby *correct* or *all-things-considered objectively right*, it is important to note. There might be a rebutting objective reason outside of your

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[31]This is Bart Streumer's great example. See Streumer (forthcoming) for a defense of this plausible idea.

[32]"Factoring Account" is Schroeder (2008)'s term for this type of view.

ken which, when it became apparent, would reveal a stronger all-things-considered case for some other option. Hence, *pace* Littlejohn (2012), justification falls short of entailing correctness or all-things-considered rightness. But it is still more than rationality.

So, there are two phenomena, significant in different ways. Possessed objective reasons matter for justification. Apparent reasons matter for rationality. And neither justification nor rationality is sufficient for correctness.

2.3 Taking Stock: A Spectrum of Reason-Based Evaluations

The last two subsections bring out a spectrum of useful reason-based evaluations:[33]

THE EVALUATION	ENTAILS COMPLYING WITH
correctness	*balance of all existing objective reasons*
justification	*balance of possessed objective reasons*
substantive rationality	*balance of apparent reasons*
structural rationality	*balance of believed reasons*

The early meta-ethics literature focused on the distinction between the first and the last entries. The need for an intermediate evaluation is clear. But as we have seen, there is actually need for more than one intermediate evaluation.

I will discuss how these distinctions extend to epistemology in §4 and §5. Given my goals, the distinction between justification and substantive rationality is the most important. It has the greatest implications for epistemology. Still, the distinction between structural rationality and justification gets blurred in epistemology too, with some striking results. So, I will also push for greater recognition of that distinction.

3 A Deeper Rationale for the Distinction

First, I want to provide a deeper basis for the distinction between apparent and possessed objective reasons. To reveal this basis, I will rehearse a framework for understanding apparent reasons that I've developed in work in meta-ethics.[34] Part of the reason for rehearsing it is that the distinction between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons falls directly out of the framework. Since my framework is independently defensible, this further illustrates that my distinction is not *ad hoc*.

My distinction is a new instance of a pattern familiar from the work of Ernest Sosa. Apparent reasons, I will suggest, are apparent facts that we *competently treat like objective*

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[33]Mark well that the second column says "entails complying with" rather than "consists in complying with". I do not think, as Schroeder (2010) suggests, that correctness *consists in* support by the balance of all existing objective reasons. I am also unsure that justification for p should be *analyzed* in terms of possessing a reason for believing p distinct from p itself. But I do think that correctness *entails* support by the balance of all existing objective reasons, and that justification *entails* support by the balance of possessed objective reasons.

[34]See [reference suppressed].

reasons, where competence is indirectly defined in terms of objective reasons and a competence/performance distinction is honored. Possessed objective reasons are apparent facts that we *aptly treat like objective reasons*. Since one can aptly treat a consideration like an objective reason only if it is one, these apparent facts are also real.

This basis for the distinction clarifies the relationship between rationality and justification. While not all apparent reasons are possessed objective reasons, all possessed objective reasons are apparent reasons, since aptness entails competence. So, while substantive rationality does not entail justification, justification entails substantive rationality; after all, justification entails possessing sufficient objective reasons, and for one to possess sufficient objective reasons they must be apparently sufficient as well, yielding rationality. This is important: I want to vindicate the thought that subjects in demon worlds may not be justified, but I deny that unwittingly reliable clairvoyants who lack access to reasons for the outputs of their clairvoyant faculties are justified in believing those outputs.

3.1 Apparent Reasons: Two Views

Let's turn to consider what apparent reasons might be. Some meta-ethicists have suggested that for R to be an apparent reason for S to ϕ is for it to appear to S that R is an objective reason to ϕ.[35] Call this view the *de dicto view*.

One worry about this view is that it overintellectualizes rationality.[36] Children and animals can be evaluated for rationality. But it is doubtful that they have the concept of a normative reason. If they lack that concept, it cannot strike them *de dicto* that anything is a normative reason. This is a reason to avoid *de dicto* views. Of course, *de dicto* theorists could retreat to permissive accounts of concept possession. Or they might say that it can appear to someone that X is an F even if this person lacks the concept of an F. But these burdensome commitments are worth avoiding if possible.

So we should not accept the *de dicto* view unless forced. This is not to say that we should reject the *de dicto* view. Non-acceptance is weaker than rejection. My own view would be a *de dicto* view if permissive accounts of concept possession were true. But my view does not require these accounts to succeed. This is why it is preferable.

But my view is not the standard alternative. The standard alternative regards apparent reasons as apparent facts that would be objective reasons if they were real facts.[37] Call this the *de re view*. We can state it more officially as follows:

> (*De Re*) A consideration P is an apparent reason for S to ϕ iff (i) it appears to S that P and (ii) P would be an objective reason for S to ϕ if P were the case.

Alas, this view is unacceptable. It is easy to imagine cases where (a) someone knows that P, (b) P is an objective deductive reason to believe Q because P entails Q, but (c) the entailment is so arcane that the person gains no apparent reason to believe Q. The *de re*

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[35] This view is defended by Scanlon (1998) and Kolodny (2005).
[36] See Parfit (2011).
[37] This view is defended by Parfit (2001, 2011), Schroeder (2007), and Way (2009).

view entails that as long as (a) and (b) are true, the person gains an apparent reason to believe Q. This is wrong: subjects with weak mathematical abilities lack apparent reasons to believe the most arcane theorems even if they know the relevant axioms.

There are some replies to this objection. But they are ultimately unconvincing. To see the first reply, consider the common distinction between *reasons* and *enabling conditions*. The fact that P entails Q is not itself a reason to believe Q. It is a fact that enables P to be a reason to believe Q. The defender of the *de re* view might revise her view by demanding the relevant enabling conditions to be apparent, and say:

> P is an apparent reason for S to ϕ iff (i) P's truth would be an objective reason for S to ϕ given conditions C, (ii) it appears to S that R and (iii) it appears to S that C.

But this view is too strong. Consider perceptual beliefs. Certain properties of perceptual experiences enable them to provide apparent reasons for belief. Intrinsic features might include the presentational character of experience. Relational features might include the reliable connection between experience and reality. We do not need to represent these enabling conditions to form rational perceptual beliefs.

The view is too strong even in some deductive cases. Having beliefs about entailments is *one* way to be sensitive to logical relations between propositions. But it is not the *only* way. Another way is to have the ability to competently infer one proposition from another by using an *inference rule*. Instead of reasoning:

(i) $\neg(P \lor Q)$

(ii) If $\neg(P \lor Q)$, then $\neg P \land \neg Q$

(iii) So, by *modus ponens*, $\neg P \land \neg Q$

one could *directly* infer (iii) from (i) by relying on one of the DeMorgan rules.

We cannot replace all rules by extra premises. Even axiomatic systems need rules, and most people do not reason axiomatically. Of course, most people are not so competent that they can use any rules like they use *modus ponens*. But equally clearly, there is a spectrum of acumen. Some people do have the native logical abilities to cleave reliably to more intricate inferential patterns without forming beliefs about the entailments that legitimate them. The revised *de re* theory cannot explain all the apparent reasons these people can acquire.

There is a different reply that *de re* theorists might pursue. They might embrace the conclusion that knowing that P gives one *some* apparent reason to believe all of P's implications. But they might add that this apparent reason is defeated when the implications are arcane, so that it is never rational to believe these implications.

But this reply does not withstand scrutiny. Apparent reasons must be defeated by other apparent reasons if the defeat is to affect degrees of rationality. In the earlier case, it was the fact *that the subject's logical abilities were limited* that explained why the subject could not rationally believe the most arcane consequences of certain axioms. *This* fact is

not one that itself must be apparent to prevent the subject from being able to rationally believe these arcane consequences. People can be deceived about their abilities, taking themselves to be geniuses when they are fools. By a fluke, their incompetence might have happened to land them on correct results, so that they lack apparent defeaters. But they are not rational. Incompetence alone can preclude rationality.

3.2   Treating, Competence and Appearance: A Better View

A better theory is worth seeking. But how can we avoid the problems with *de re* views without overintellectualizing rationality? We can see how by considering the most general description of the problem for *de re* views. The overarching problem was that these views imply that a person can have P as an apparent reason to ϕ *even when that person cannot competently treat P like an objective reason to ϕ*. We should profit from this observation.

Notice that it is possible to treat something like an F without having the concept of an F. My cat can treat me like a vending machine without having the concept of a vending machine. Similarly, one can treat a consideration like an objective reason without having the concept of an objective reason. My cat can treat the sound of food going into its dish like an objective reason to walk into the room containing the dish.

What is it to treat R like an objective reason to ϕ? For present purposes, to treat R like an objective reason to ϕ of some kind is to be disposed to form attitudes or act in all or at least most of the ways that would be correct if R were an objective reason to ϕ of that kind.[38] Barring a permissive theory of concept possession, this disposition is weaker than a *de dicto* belief about objective reasons.

The obvious idea is to invoke this weaker notion in a new theory. Apparent reasons, I suggest, are apparent facts that we competently treat like objective reasons. More officially:

> *Competent Treating* (CT): A consideration P is an apparent reason for S to ϕ iff
>
> (i) it appears to S that P,
>
> (ii) S treats P like an objective reason to ϕ, and
>
> (iii) this treating manifests a relevant objective reasons-sensitive competence of S's,
>
> where the competence is a disposition of S's to treat P-like considerations like objective reasons to do ϕ-like things only if they are objective reasons to do ϕ-like things.

The core ideas are simple. For P to be an objective reason for one to ϕ, it is not enough that P appears to be the case and would be an objective reason to ϕ if it were the case. P must also be something that one is disposed to treat like an objective reason to ϕ. The

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[38]My views about treating are more complicated than I let on (see [reference suppressed] for the full story), but not in ways that will make a difference here as far as I can see, so I spare the reader the gory details.

view captures the intuition that apparent reasons must "look like" objective reasons from someone's perspective. But it does so without overintellectualization.

Of course, one might incompetently treat a consideration like an objective reason. One might randomly treat Q and R like objective reasons to believe S. By luck, there might be a proof of S from Q and R. But if this proof is arcane, it is not rational for one to believe S on the basis of Q and R. This is why CT invokes competence, which is indirectly defined in terms of objective reasons and non-normative factors.

3.3 Grounding the Distinction: Competence and Performance

If we accept CT, we can better understand the difference between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons. CT predicts and explains this difference in two ways.

First, competences can be fallible. A competence to ϕ is not necessarily an infallible ability to ϕ. So, one can competently treat P like an objective reason to ϕ even if P wouldn't be an objective reason to ϕ if P were true.

Secondly and more crucially, there is a *competence/performance distinction.* Having a competence to succeed does not entail being in a position to succeed if one tries. Competences are dispositions. Like other dispositions, there is a range of favorable conditions for manifestation. Unfavorable conditions don't destroy competence. An archer, for example, retains the competence to hit the bull's-eye even when some trickster creates unexpected gusts that blow the arrow off target. An agent with the same competence could be relocated to a systematically unfavorable environment and be hoodwinked about its favorableness by a trickster. If so, this agent's skill is not destroyed. But it won't yield reliability.

Like other competences, reasons-sensitive competences do not guarantee actual reliability. So, in principle, one could competently treat a vast range of apparent considerations like objective reasons even if they wouldn't be objective reasons if true. All we need is for the circumstances to be both *unfavorable* and *misleading*.

So, CT predicts that apparent reasons can fail to be objective reasons. But an indirect connection to objective reasons remains. While rationality does not give us the ability to reliably ϕ for objective reasons, the capacities rational subjects display are the same capacities that yield success in favorable cases. Rationality is a competence to get connected to objective reasons in favorable environments, however unhelpful in unfavorable ones.

3.4 Possessing an Objective Reason to ϕ

A consideration can be competently treated like an objective reason without being one. Indeed, a consideration can be competently treated like an objective reason without being objectively likely to be an objective reason. In these cases, the consideration is only an *apparent* reason. If so, what more does it take to possess an objective reason R to ϕ?

My answer involves a spin on CT that will sound familiar to epistemologists:

Apt Treating (AT): S possesses an objective reason R to ϕ iff

(i) S correctly treats R like an objective reason to ϕ—i.e., R is an objective reason to ϕ and S treats R like an objective reason to ϕ,

(ii) S's treating manifests S's relevant objective reasons-sensitive competence, and

(iii) the correctness of S's treating manifests that reasons-sensitive competence.

To see why AT is plausible, consider an example:

> (*Misfire*) Bill is a competent but not infallible logician who can directly see many entailments. It strikes him tonight that there is a proof of Q from P involving certain steps, which he seems to see by exercising his competence. Alas, his fallible competence misfires and yields a mistaken impression: there is not *that* kind of proof of Q from P. As it happens, there *is* a proof of Q from P. But it is arcane and far beyond Bill's direct grasp.

Here P is an objective reason to believe Q because there is a proof of Q from P. Bill is competently attracted to treating P like an objective reason to believe Q: his logical 'vision' is a product of his mathematical competence. But Bill's vision misfires, as fallible vision can. For this reason, Bill does not possess the objective reason to believe Q that P *actually constitutes*, since he does not grasp the real proof of Q from P.

Here is why. While Bill's attraction to treat P like an objective reason to believe Q is *correct* in the minimal sense that P is an objective reason to believe Q, the correctness of Bill's attraction does not manifest his competence. The attraction is correct for reasons that are beyond the reach of his competence. The attraction manifests competence, but its correctness has nothing to do with that competence.

None of this is to deny that Bill might possess other objective reasons to believe Q. We are only claiming that Bill does not possess the objective reason to believe Q that P actually constitutes, since he cannot see the real proof. P is for Bill only an apparent reason to believe Q: the connection Bill sees between P and Q is not the connection that actually exists. There is an analogy with veridical hallucination: there appears to Bill to be a connection and there is one, but the connection does not explain the appearance.

3.5 The R/J Distinction: A New Instance of an Old Pattern

We can now see that the distinction between rationality and justification is a new instance of an old pattern. Ernest Sosa has made us familiar with a triadic pattern of evaluation for attitudes and activities that aim at some target. An attitude or act A is:

- *correct*, when A hits the relevant target,

- *competent*, when A manifests a disposition to hit the relevant target, and

- *apt*, when A's correctness manifests the relevant competence.

What have interested us are *treatings of considerations like objective reasons*. The same triadic pattern arises for these treatings. These treatings are:

- *correct*, when the treated considerations are in fact objective reasons,

- *competent*, when the treatings manifest a competence to treat only objective reasons like objective reasons, and

- *apt*, when the correctness of these treatings manifests this competence.

Apparent reasons are considerations that one competently treats like objective reasons. Possessed objective reasons are considerations that one aptly treats like objective reasons. Since apt treating entails correct treating, possessed normative reasons are objective reasons. It also falls out that possessed normative reasons are apparent reasons, since apt treatings are also competent. But it doesn't fall out that all apparent reasons are objective reasons. For competent treating is not necessarily correct treating.

My distinction between rationality and justification is an upshot of these ideas:

(J) S has *ex ante* justification to ϕ iff ϕ-ing is supported by the balance of considerations that S aptly treats like objective reasons to ϕ.

(R) It is *ex ante* rational for S to ϕ iff ϕ-ing is supported by the considerations that S competently treats like objective reasons to ϕ.[39]

Since apt treating entails competent treating, *ex ante* justification entails *ex ante* rationality. But since competent treating doesn't entail apt treating, *ex ante* rationality does not entail *ex ante* justification. So while rationality is separable, the two are not orthogonal. This is why unwittingly reliable clairvoyants are unjustified. They fail to possess objective reasons *precisely because* they lack apparent reasons.

The connection with Sosa's triadic pattern reinforces the objectivity of my distinction. The triadic pattern arises for any attitude or activity with an aim. Even if one doesn't want to organize all of one's normative theorizing around this pattern, one cannot deny that it is a real pattern. The connection also allows us to see how my view improves on Sosa's virtue epistemology. My appeal to reasons-based competences yields two improvements: (i) greater fineness of grain, and (ii) a more obvious explanation of why unwittingly reliable clairvoyants, Truetemp, and the like are not only not rational but unjustified. But the views are similar in spirit. One might say that my view is a *reasons-based* virtue epistemology.

4   Extending the Distinctions to Epistemology

Extending my central distinctions to epistemology is now easy. We need only draw our attention to the existence of objective epistemic reasons and apply the framework.

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[39] *Ex ante* justification is justification *to believe*, as opposed to justified *believing*; similarly for *ex ante* rationality. *Ex post* evaluations also matter. I assume the orthodox view about the relationship between the *ex ante* and the *ex post*. Elsewhere I defend this view against objections of the sort from Turri (2010).

4.1   Objective Epistemic Reasons: Unpossessed and Possessed

What are objective epistemic reasons? Clear examples include pieces of evidence that are not necessarily possessed by anyone. Call such pieces of evidence *objective evidence.* Evidence in this sense is, as Tom Kelly puts it, a "reliable sign, symptom, or mark of that which it is evidence of."[40] While many epistemologists ignore this kind of evidence, the concept is a clear one that often features in our ordinary thinking.

Talk of objective evidence applies to items in many different ontological categories. But much of this talk is elliptical. Evidence must play certain roles: it must be able to probabilify, to be explained, and to figure in our reasoning, for example.[41] Plausibly, only things with a proposition-like structure can play these roles. Hence, when we say:

(a) these fingerprints on the gun are evidence that he is the murderer,

what we really mean is something like:

(b) the fact that these fingerprints are on the gun is evidence that he is the murderer.

Why call objective evidence "objective"? Because of its connection to objective probability: a piece of objective evidence has an objective probabilistic connection to truth, by being a reliable indicator of truth.[42] "Objective" does not mean "public". Many examples of objective evidence are public. But a fact needn't be public to be objective evidence.

Here is an illustration. Facts about your current feelings are objective evidence for certain conclusions about the broader mood you are in. Not all of our mental life is transparent. Sometimes we must reason inferentially about it. There are better and worse ways. In the case of feelings and moods, reliable correlations help to explain why some ways are better than others. But facts about your feelings are private.

Epistemologists often ignore objective epistemic reasons, regarding them as irrelevant to justification. But this is a mistake. Yes, we must *possess* epistemic reasons for them to justify us. But it does not follow that what we possess cannot be an objective epistemic reason. If the name on the driver's license is not yours, it cannot give you legal permission to drive. That does not show that you need a different kind of thing to drive. You just need to bear a different *relation* to the same kind of thing.

Here we find another place where epistemologists get worried. Many assume that we will have to analyze the relation of possession in terms of justification or knowledge. So,

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[40]Kelly (2006).

[41]See Williamson (2000) for a now classic discussion of some of these roles.

[42]While I find a reliable indication account of objective epistemic reasons for belief plausible, I should stress that this account is not necessary for reaching any of my conclusions. Even if one ties the notion of an objective reason to an understanding of objective probability on which objective probabilistic relations are necessary and *a priori* (*a la* Keynes (1921)), one could still reach my strongly externalist conclusions about objective epistemic reasons. After all, even relations that are necessary *a priori* are not ones that ordinary subjects are always or even often in a position to detect. If the only route from p to q is via some extremely complicated proof that only a supercomputer of the future could work out, no presently living person will have the ability to see that p is an objective reason to believe q. But it still is.

many assume that giving an account of justification in terms of objective epistemic reasons would be circular. But this is hasty. We can appeal to non-doxastic mental states, and to normative concepts more primitive than the concept of justification.[43] My theory does this. My theory does appeal to one normative concept. But it is the concept of an objective reason. Alternatively, one could directly ground the relation of possession in non-doxastic mental states that meet certain reliabilist constraints, thereby avoiding circularity.

Many epistemologists have thought that possession is a matter of access. Access need not be understood in internalist terms. Does that mean that access must be understood in terms of knowledge or justification? No. Note that non-doxastic seemings can be evaluated under the triadic scheme noted in the last section. A visual seeming, for instance, can be

- *accurate*, when what visually seems so is so,

- *adroit*, when the seeming manifests the subject's visual ability, and

- *apt*, when the seeming's accuracy manifests the subject's visual ability.

Apt non-doxastic seemings are not knowledge, since knowledge entails belief. Moreover, these seemings cannot be justified or unjustified, though they can manifest a more primitive sort of ability. Nevertheless, they afford access to reality.

Access to objective epistemic reasons is not sufficient for possessing these reasons. Having access to a fact E that constitutes objective evidence for P is not sufficient for possessing E as good evidence to believe P. Here we can consider variations on the counterexamples to *de re* theories. The fact that someone has Koplik spots is objective evidence that this person has measles. But seeing that this person has Koplik spots is insufficient for one to have reason to believe that this person has measles. After all, the connection between measles and Koplik spots has not always been apparent.[44]

Does this mean that one must also be justified in believing that E is objective evidence for P to possess E as evidence for P? No. We found a path between *de dicto* and *de re* views by attending to the notion of treating something like an objective reason. We can invoke this notion again. If one is aptly attracted to treat the presence of Koplik spots as evidence that the person has measles, one possesses that piece of objective evidence to believe that she has measles. This is what we need, beyond access. More officially, then:

Objective Evidence Possession: S possesses objective evidence E to believe P iff

(i) it aptly seems to S that E, and

(ii) S aptly treats E like objective evidence to believe P.

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[43]For more detail on this move than I provide below, see [reference suppressed], [reference suppressed], and [reference suppressed].

[44]Adam Marushak alerted me to this example and its usefulness in this context.

If one thinks that objective evidential relations can hold between false propositions, one could relax the account by replacing "aptly" in (i) with "competently". But my own inclination is to say that E is not objective evidence to believe P when E is false.

That is compatible with allowing that one has *other* objective evidence for P when E is false. Since "objective" doesn't mean *public*, this could include the sheer fact that it non-doxastically appears to one that E when there is a reliable link between appearance and reality. So, it is not as if one is always unjustified in believing P on the basis of E if E is false.

4.2   Apparent Epistemic Reasons

But if all reliable indication relations between appearance and reality are broken, we should deny that the fact that one is appeared to in some way is objective evidence that things are that way. One can, however, have apparent reasons in these cases. This falls out of the account I offered in the last section. The following is an upshot:

> *Apparent Evidence Possession*: S possesses apparent evidence E to believe P iff
>
> (i) it appears to S that E, and
>
> (ii) S competently treats E like objective evidence to believe P.

Here E could be some false proposition about the external world that appears to be true in virtue of S's visual experience. Accordingly, one can possess an external world proposition E as an apparent epistemic reason to believe P, despite E's being false.

Can we explain why one has apparent epistemic reasons even when appearance-reality correlations are annihilated? Yes. Recall the competence/performance distinction. My envatted brain retains my epistemic competences. Like other dispositions, competences can be retained in inhospitable situations.

4.3   Rationality vs. Justification in Epistemology

Given the distinction between apparent and possessed objective epistemic reasons, it is easy to distinguish between substantive epistemic rationality and justification. For *ex ante* rationality and justification, the distinction would go as follows:

(R_e) It is *ex ante* epistemically rational for S to have doxastic attitude D(P) iff D(P)-ing is favored by the balance of S's apparent epistemic reasons.

(J_e) S has *ex ante* epistemic justification to have doxastic attitude D(P) iff D(P)-ing is favored by the balance of the objective epistemic reasons that S possesses.

Possessing an objective epistemic reason and being an *apparent* epistemic reason would then be analyzed in the way that I suggested earlier, yielding the more precise:

(R_e*) It is *ex ante* rational for S to have D(P) iff D(P)-ing is favored by the considerations S competently treats like objective epistemic reasons.

(J_e*) S has *ex ante* justification to have D(P) iff D(P)-ing is favored by the balance of considerations S aptly treats like objective epistemic reasons.

Because I am drawing a distinction that epistemologists in many different camps should acknowledge, I have not given necessary and sufficient conditions in descriptive terms for being an objective epistemic reason or for being favored by an objective epistemic reason. The distinction should be neutral on these issues.

I did suggest examples of objective epistemic reasons—viz., objective evidence. I also suggested that favoring could be understood in terms of reliable indication. But ultimately I want to be neutral on whether all objective epistemic reasons are evidence and whether favoring must be understood purely in terms of reliable indication.

4.4 Further Divergences: Structural Rationality

The difference between (R_e) and (J_e) doesn't exhaust the distinction between rationality and justification. Structural rationality was what meta-ethicists first contrasted with support by objective reasons. While many epistemologists reject coherentism about justification, confusion remains about the relation between structural pressures and justification.[45]

Here is one illustration. Several epistemologists claim that merely believing that one's belief was unreliably formed can defeat one's justification for that first-order belief.[46] This is a mistake. It is incoherent for one to host some belief while believing it to be unreliably formed. But this problem is not one with the first-order belief. If one's first-order belief was reliably formed and one has no reason to believe that it was unreliably formed, one should resolve this conflict of attitudes by dropping the meta-belief and retaining the first-order belief. So we can deny that one's first-order justification can be defeated by the meta-belief. We can instead use requirements like the following to explain what is going awry:

> (*Epistemic Enkrasia*) Structural rationality requires that if one believes that some doxastic attitude that one holds is epistemically unjustified, one abandons that belief.

We could follow Broome (1999) in taking "requires" to take wide scope over the conditional, so that Epistemic Enkrasia is equivalent to a prohibition against a certain conjunction of states. But even if we understand Epistemic Enkrasia in a narrow scope way, we could agree that this requirement is rationally escapable in the sense that one can permissibly exit this narrow scope requirement by abandoning the meta-belief.[47]

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[45]Though see Worsnip (2015, forthcoming) for progress in resolving these confusions.

[46]See Goldman (1986), Plantinga (1993), and Bergmann (2006).

[47]See Lord (2011) on narrow-scoping and the distinction between exiting and violating a requirement.

Exactly what are the requirements of structural epistemic rationality? This is a large question that I cannot resolve here. What matters for our purposes is that these requirements can be rationally escaped in a way that the requirements of justification (and requirements of substantive rationality as well) cannot. Of course, one could escape certain requirements of justification by losing certain evidence. But this escape will be a non-rational process or a process that makes one epistemically blameworthy.

What is the relationship between substantive and structural rationality? I assume that structural rationality is not sufficient for substantive rationality: one's doxastic attitudes could obviously be fully coherent with each other without being responsive to the substantive rational pressures generated by the non-doxastic appearances.[48] The converse entailment is more plausible.[49] Kolodny (2007), Lord (2014) and Kiesewetter (Ms) all suggest that whenever one is incoherent, one is guaranteed to be failing to respond correctly to some substantive rational pressure(s).[50] Hence structural irrationality entails substantive irrationality; contraposing, substantive rationality entails structural rationality. While this view is not required for any of my arguments in this paper, I do accept it and will assume it for simplicity's sake. Notice, however, that it is not a view on which structural and substantive rationality are equivalent, but just one on which the latter entails the former.

4.5   Comparisons with Other Bifurcating Proposals

I have now illustrated how the distinction applies in epistemology. This is not the first time someone has tried to bifurcate epistemic evaluation. Why prefer my bifurcation?

A large reason is that it is an instance of a more general distinction that is defensible across the board, drawing on insights outside of epistemology. Indeed, it follows from simple reflections on objective reasons and our relations to them. Similar points do not hold for bifurcation proposals that other epistemologists have advanced.

Consider Goldman (1988)'s distinction between strong and weak justification. While the examples he used to motivate this distinction do illustrate two different properties, there is a worry that weak justification is not really a kind of *justification*. Many ethicists

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[48]One could, of course, use "coherence" in a broader sense to mean coherence with both other doxastic attitudes and non-doxastic presentational mental states. But because internalist epistemologies on which non-doxastic presentational mental states can provide non-inferential reasons for worldly beliefs are usually classified as versions of foundationalism, I will not use "coherence" in that way.

[49]Though see Worsnip (forthcoming) for an argument against it. For what it's worth, I think his arguments do not show that *apparent reasons* and coherence can conflict, though I think some of them do show that objective reasons to which one has access and coherence can conflict. (Remember that for me, mere access to a reason-giving fact isn't sufficient for that fact's being an apparent or possessed reason.) For reasons defended in my [reference suppressed] to which I will allude in the conclusion, I don't think rational epistemic akrasia of the kind on which Worsnip draws is possible, and indeed I think there cannot be substantively rational false beliefs about the requirements of either structural or substantive rationality.

[50]Kolodny also argues that there is nothing wrong with incoherence *as such* and hence that there are no genuine requirements of structural rationality. He uses the entailment from structural irrationality to guaranteed substantive rational failure to explain away the intuition that there is something wrong with incoherence as such. Lord and Kiesewetter diverge from Kolodny, and don't take that entailment to undermine the normativity of structural rationality. I side with them.

would balk, seeing weak justification as mere excusability. By contrast, the distinction between rationality and justification can be gleaned by inspecting the nature of rationality and justification. It is no surprise that we already have separate words for them.

Similar worries arise for attempts to distinguish between subjective and objective justification. Why is "subjective justification" a kind of justification? When our undergraduates talk about "subjective truth", they are not talking about a kind of truth. Why think that talk of subjective justification should be taken more seriously?

Other bifurcations are stipulations that fall out of certain frameworks of evaluation. Ernest Sosa has separated two kinds of justification on the basis of a distinction between exercises of competence in hospitable environments and displays of competence in inhospitable environments.[51] I like the underlying idea. But I dislike the labels, which invite the objection that one of these properties is not a kind of justification at all.

Similar remarks apply to the attempt to distinguish between personal and doxastic justification.[52] There is a distinction between evaluations of persons and evaluations of attitudes or acts. But it is not a distinction between two kinds of justification. Rather, it is marked by the distinction between evaluations like *blameworthy*, *praiseworthy*, *excusable*, etc. and evaluations like *wrong*, *justified*, *permissible*, etc.

Some have recognized this fact and instead appealed to the distinction between justification and blamelessness. But blamelessness is too weak to be interesting. Denials of responsibility establish blamelessness. But there is no important positive epistemic property that is compatible with total insanity, though total insanity can make one blameless.

Excusability is a stronger contender than blamelessness if we accept Gardner's picture and view excuses as expressions of our capacity for responsibility rather than denials of responsibility. So understood, my inclination is to see excusability and rationality as cognate notions (like Gardner). So if you want to appeal to excusability, you are my ally.

But there are reasons to appeal to rationality rather than excusability. Many worry that talk of epistemic responsibility presupposes an implausible doxastic voluntarism. I don't share these worries, but they are pervasive enough to be worth sidestepping.

5   Implications for Epistemology

Having defended my distinction, I turn to consider some implications for epistemology. Drawing the distinction in epistemology makes a difference—indeed, several differences.

5.1   How the Internalism/Externalism Debate Shouldn't Proceed

First of all, my distinction clarifies the terms of debates between internalists and externalists in epistemology and shows how these debates should not proceed.

Disagreements between internalists and externalists in epistemology are usually framed as disagreements about a single property—justification, most centrally. People assume

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[51]See Sosa (1993).
[52]See Bach (1986), Engel (1993), and Littlejohn (2012).

we can apply the methodology of systematizing intuitions about cases to make progress. Many internalists support their views by appealing to cases. Consider BonJour (1980, 1985)'s clairvoyance cases and Cohen (1984)'s demon world. Similarly, many externalists have tried to undermine internalism just by appealing to cases. Consider Goldman (1999, 2009)'s forgotten evidence cases.

Once the distinction between rationality and justification is appreciated in its full generality, this familiar way of conducting the disputes becomes unsatisfying. Internalist intuitions are liable to conflate these phenomena. It is no surprise that almost every epistemologist I quoted at the outset is an internalist. We can grant the internalist's intuitions as right for rationality but argue that they undershoot the intended target.

Notice that this leads to no irenic dissolution of the debate. Instead, it leads to an advantage for the externalist. Because justification requires possessing objectively good reasons and rationality does not, internalists about epistemic justification are in trouble. The property they care about may have a role. But it is irrelevant as such to justification.

Because some internalists uphold the value of epistemic blamelessness, they might accept this verdict but see it in a different light. They might insist that blamelessness is what we really care about. But not all internalists will agree. Consider Pryor:

> Many philosophers share Cohen's intuition that it's possible for a brain in a vat, if he conducts his affairs properly, to have many justified…beliefs about his environment…. [T]his intuition survives the recognition that being epistemically blameless does not suffice for being justified. It doesn't seem merely to be the case that the brain in a vat can form beliefs in a way that is epistemically blameless. It also seems to be the case that he can form beliefs in a way that is epistemically proper, and that the beliefs…would be fully justified….[53]

Deeper arguments are needed. If our paradigms of blamelessness include "lack of muscular control…, subjection to gross forms of coercion by threats, and types of mental abnormality",[54] it is implausible that the envatted are just epistemically blameless. But that just illustrates the need to separate blamelessness and excusability. The envatted are better off than people bereft of the capacity for responsible thought (e.g., the mad). But the claim that the envatted achieve more than epistemic excusability is a stronger claim.

5.2 A Challenge for Internalists

To defend that claim, internalists must establish that the epistemic domain differs from others in admitting of no distinction between apparent reasons and possessed objective reasons. It is unclear that internalists can do this unless they deny that truth is the basic epistemic goal. If a belief essentially aims at any properly epistemic target, objective epistemic reasons are going to have something objective rather than merely apparent to do with helping it hit that target. An epistemic reason R to believe P will be objectively good

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[53]Pryor (2001: 117).

[54]From Hart (1968)—a target in Gardner's attack on the view that excuses are denials of responsibility.

to the extent that believing P for R makes it objectively more likely that one will achieve the aim of belief with respect to P, and bad if it does not.[55] If the aim is truth, unreliable indicators of truth will not be objectively good epistemic reasons for belief.

Here we find a reversal of the standard dialectic on the new evil demon problem. Given a richer set of concepts, it is more natural to take the demon world to support a reliabilist externalism about justification, not to undermine this view. The demon-worlder's reasons just don't look objectively good if the fundamental epistemic goal is true belief or knowledge. This undermines Cohen's reply to reliabilists. Cohen insisted that rationality is what obviously matters from the epistemic point of view. This is false: it is *unobvious* how rationality matters from the epistemic point of view. This conclusion echoes recent doubts about the significance of rationality in meta-ethics.[56]

It is unclear why we necessarily have objective epistemic reasons to be epistemically rational if we embrace the fundamental epistemic goals that many embrace. There are contingent links. But these links are irrelevant to the issue at hand. The internalist claims that the demon-worlder is epistemically justified, which entails that she possesses objectively good epistemic reasons. That claim is not bolstered by contingent links. Internalists owe us a deeper explanation.

5.3 Challenging Concessive Externalist Views

There are challenges for epistemologists other than internalists. While externalists deny that mere beliefs and seemings are sufficient for positive justification, they often concede that these factors can defeat justification regardless of their externalist features.

Our distinction casts doubt on this concession. There is no reason to assume that the reasons *to φ* that are relevant to justification are more objective than the reasons *against* φ-ing that are relevant to justification. Consider prudence: if there are powerful objective prudential reasons not to perform some act, the mere fact that one's laziness makes them seem weak doesn't defeat these reasons. The same goes for morality, law, chess, etc.

It is more natural to deny that beliefs and non-doxastic seemings can as such defeat justification. They may affect some belief's degree of rationality or affect the overall rationality of certain sets of doxastic attitudes. But they do not necessarily reduce the justifying power of any objectively good reasons for particular doxastic attitudes.

Yet many externalists have not agreed. Bergmann (2006) and Plantinga (1993) hold that believed defeaters are real defeaters. While Goldman (1979) had a uniform reliabilist account of positive and negative justification-relevant factors, he later holds something closer to this concessive view. Discussing a case where someone believes her visual powers to be impaired, he said: "What she believes, then, is such that if it were true, the beliefs in question... would not be permitted by a right rule system. Satisfaction of this condition, I now propose, is sufficient to undermine permittedness."[57] Something similarly troubling

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[55]I formulate this in a proposition-relative way not only because this is the most natural way to formulate it, but because formulating it in a global way leads to problems well-documented by Berker (2013).

[56]See especially Kolodny (2005).

[57]Goldman (1986: 111).

holds for other concessions to internalists. Externalists will allow experiences *per se* to be defeaters. Consider Goldman (2011: 272) discussing an example involving Sidney, who continues to believe

> that it is sunny right now...despite the fact that he is walking in the middle of a rainstorm. Surely his current perceptual experience is a defeater for this belief [...].

If we focus on fortunate subjects, this is plausible. Our visual experiences are reliable indicators of the facts. But it easy to imagine subjects whose experiences are inaccessibly unreliable. The intuition remains that Sidney's twin would be irrational if he kept the belief while finding himself faced with experiences like the ones had by Sidney. Could this render the twin's belief unjustified if it was previously justified? If the experiences are unreliable indicators of the facts, it is hard to see why we should agree.

It is better to explain the defeat intuitions by appeal to rationality and apparent reasons. Appearances of objective reasons *against* attitudes and acts are no less capable of being misleading than appearances of objective reasons *for* attitudes and acts.

5.4 Light Shed on Puzzling Cases

My distinction also helps to resolve conflicting intuitions about some puzzling cases.

Checkered Experience. Consider cases of experiences with checkered etiologies:

> (*Fearful Sight*) Before seeing Jack, Jill fears that Jack is angry at her. When she sees him, her fear causes her to have a visual experience in which he looks angry.[58]

It is plausible that this experience's etiology undercuts its justifying force. Not only is it plausible that Jill would not be *ex post* justified in believing that Jack is angry: it is also plausible that the reason that experience provides for her *to believe* that Jack is angry is defeated because of the defective etiology. The intuition has nothing to do with Jill's access to the fact that her experience was merely caused by baseless fear. We can stipulate that she is in no position to appreciate this fact. The intuitions remain.

We can explain the intuitions in a framework where justification is understood in terms of possessed objective reasons. While unpossessed *rebutting* defeaters have no influence on whether one has an objective reason to believe something, unpossessed *undercutting* defeaters do. In *Fearful Sight*, the fact that Jill's experience is grounded in fear explains why that experience does not add to the stock of objective reasons she has. It is clear why: experiences that are merely products of baseless fear are unreliable indicators of reality.

But it is unsatisfying to stop here. It is rational for Jill to increase her confidence that Jack is angry in *Fearful Sight*. My distinctions let us honor this intuition.

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[58]This is from Siegel (forthcoming). See also Siegel (2012).

Rational Self-Doubt and Supposed Examples of Higher-Order Defeat. Our distinction casts doubt on the ubiquity of higher-order defeat. Some alleged examples of higher-order defeat rest on intuitions about the irrationality of not responding to certain higher-order appearances. It is unclear that agents in these cases automatically acquire objective epistemic reasons to modify their first-order attitudes. Moreover, even if the higher-order appearances *are* objectively good evidence for certain higher-order beliefs, worries about conflation remain. Let's consider these points in reverse.

Higher-order evidence against one's first-order competence generates no familiar kind of undercutting defeat. Consider a case from David Christensen (2010: 187):

> (*Drugs*) "I am asked to be a subject in an experiment. Subjects are given a drug, and then asked to draw conclusions about simple logical puzzles. The drug has been shown to degrade people's performance in just this kind of task quite sharply. [...] I accept the offer, and, after sipping a coffee while reading the consent form, I tell them I'm ready to begin. Before giving me any pills, they give me a practice question:
>
> > *Suppose all bulls are fierce and Ferdinand is not a fierce bull. Which of the following must be true? (a) Ferdinand is fierce; (b) Ferdinand is not fierce; (c) Ferdinand is a bull; (d) Ferdinand is not a bull.*"
>
> I become extremely confident that the answer is that only (d) must be true. But then I'm told that the coffee they gave me actually was laced with the drug. My confidence that the answer is "only (d)" drops dramatically."

Clearly, one is irrational if one maintains the same degree of confidence in (d). This is Christensen's main intuition. Yet the objective probability that my belief in (d) is true conditional on the first-order evidence and the apparent fact that I took the drug is no less than the objective probability that my belief is true conditional on just the first-order evidence. So, it is puzzling how the higher-order evidence has any bearing on what first-order beliefs I have objective epistemic reasons to have. It is less puzzling to think that there is a different issue here, separate from defeat at the first order.

We can reinforce this verdict by noting that intuitions of irrationality remain even if the subjects in these cases are not defective in the ways the appearances suggest, and even if the higher-order appearances are unreliable. Suppose that in a variation on *Drugs*, the experimenters lied and never drugged the coffee. This has no effect on the intuition that it is irrational for me to have the same degree of confidence in (d).

So there is a worry about conflation. Reasoning as the subject reasons in *Drugs* is correct! How can the irrationality of his total mental state have any bearing on whether he is permitted to reason in this way? The fact of irrationality has implications for whether he could be epistemically praised for doing the epistemically right thing. But just as there can be excusable wrongdoing, there can be praiseless and even blameworthy rightdoing.[59]

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[59]Cf. Zimmerman (1997).

Those who believe in the ubiquity of higher-order defeat need deeper arguments. This is pressing, since they appeal to the irrationality of not responding to higher-order appearances to argue against plausible claims about justification. Schechter (2013), for example, rejects single-premise closure for justification on the basis of higher-order considerations. We should consider alternatives before rejecting such principles!

Forgotten Evidence. Our distinction also resolves conflicting intuitions about cases of forgotten evidence. Much of what we claim to know and justifiedly believe rests on reasons that have faded from view. One would invite skepticism if one insisted that we don't know or justifiedly believe in these cases. Externalists are right to insist on this.

Nevertheless, there is a real tension in these cases that externalists neglect. They fail to explain, for example, why it would be irrational to keep believing P with a similarly high degree of confidence when one is asked why one thinks that P and realizes that one cannot bring to mind anything except the seeming that P.

Our distinctions ease the tension. When memory seemings are reliable, the fact that one seems to remember that P is a good objective reason for believing P. Still, when one is pressed, this seeming can easily be destroyed, and the objective force of the reason can cease to be apparent. When I consider whether I am justified in believing that Elizabeth I was born in 1533, doubts may arise. Ignoring these doubts is irrational.

Still, it is incredible to think that justification is so easily destroyed. So, it is better to apply distinctions. When doubts arise, the force of the objective reasons one has will cease to be apparent. So, it will be irrational to host the belief while the objective force ceases to be apparent. But one could revert to trust—whereupon the force will become apparent again. Hence, one faces no irreversible obligation to drop one's beliefs.

6   Concluding Remarks

Let's take stock. I've defended a distinction between justification and rationality. My distinction fell out of a general distinction between possessed objective reasons and apparent reasons. The distinction is grounded in a more fundamental distinction between competently treating something like an objective reason and aptly treating something like an objective reason. It is a consequence of the need to draw a competence/performance distinction with respect to our sensitivity to objective reasons.

One can see the distinction without seeing this more basic explanation. Examples of objective undercutting defeaters afford illustrations. These defeaters prevent apparent reasons from being objective reasons by destroying the objective favoring relations they apparently bear to relevant attitudes or actions. But one is still *rationally required* to take these apparent reasons into account, since the objective undercutter is not apparent.

It is worth remembering that unpossessed undercutting defeaters differ from unpossessed rebutting defeaters. The fact that there is a mountain of objective evidence against P that one has not yet discovered does not render one's belief that P unjustified. This is because the objective reasons that one possesses continue to be objective reasons, and are

not outweighed by any other objective reasons that one possesses. To outweigh a reason is not to destroy it. Only total undercutting destroys.

This distinction explains why some rational beliefs are not justified beliefs without making the requirements for justification too strong. If an apparent reason that one has is objectively undercut, one's relevant attitude cannot be justified by that reason. But it is false that one is unjustified just because there is an unpossessed objective reason that outweighs the objective reasons that one possesses. This is why justified wrongdoing is possible, and why it is possible to have justified false beliefs.

It is a virtue of my version of the distinction that it does not make justification so demanding that we cannot have it unless our beliefs are true or constitute knowledge. This is what we should expect on general grounds. Justifiedly doing the right thing is best. But justified wrongdoing is still better than excusable wrongdoing.

The implications of these points for epistemology are significant, as we have seen. This is unsurprising. Parallel distinctions have caused important shifts in the dialectical terrain in recent ethics. I have only scratched the most obvious surfaces in this paper.

Before drawing things to a close, it is worth considering how one might try to resist my distinction. To do so, one must argue that there is something special about the norms of epistemology that reduces the distance between objective and apparent epistemic reasons. How could one defend this conclusion? How could there fail to be an appearance/reality distinction with respect to complying with a given norm?

There are many systems of norms for which the distinction applies undeniably—e.g., legal norms, norms of etiquette and prescriptive grammar, and many moral norms. But there are *some* cases where the distinction is hard to draw. Consider the norms of loyalty that are constitutive of some relationships. The following example illustrates why the distinction is hard to draw with respect to these norms:

> (*Disguise*) A and B agreed to have a monogamous relationship. But A worries that B would cheat if B got the chance. A decides to test this hypothesis. With the help of some extraordinary costuming, A manages to dress up like a totally different person on whom B would have an instant crush. Disguised, A has been showing up around B's workplace to make advances. B believes on the basis of this misleading evidence that this is a fascinating person distinct from A. B now seems to be having a date with this person when A had planned to be out of town....

Suppose now that A suddenly reveals the truth to B and demands an explanation. The following would not be a convincing response on B's behalf: "But look, I was not *unloyal* to you. After all, it was *you* I just showed to a fine evening!"

Why is this unconvincing? Because whether we manifest loyalty is determined by how we respond to the appearances. One really fails to manifest loyalty if it appears to one that some option would involve disloyalty but one pursues the option anyway.

There is a further point. Suppose B is a loyal partner. Would it cast doubt on B's loyalty if B had a romantic evening with someone who managed to look and act just like A, and whom B rationally believed on this basis to be A? No. If A were unaware that the person

B was having the romantic evening with was dressed up this way, A could reasonably demand an explanation. But B *could* show that there was no failure of loyalty.

Are there other norms like this norm of loyalty? What is the basis for such norms? Remember that all norms are value-based: the point of complying with a norm is to respond to the value of something. Not all values are to be valued in the same way. Some values call for an internal kind of valuing. They call for us to hold certain attitudes in response to the appearances. Consider beauty. It calls primarily for admiration, and whether we admire beauty is determined entirely by how we respond to the appearances. Admiration thus differs from external forms of valuing, such as instrumental promotion.

Are there values that fundamentally call only for internal recognition? Some have thought so. Kant took the value of humanity to call most fundamentally for a kind of recognition by the good will. One could imagine a structurally similar view about epistemic value. One could imagine a theory of epistemic value that would affirm that accuracy is the fundamental epistemic value but hold that the fundamentally proper response to this epistemic value is respect, not promotion. What is respect for accuracy? Precisely what we manifest when we comply with requirements of epistemic rationality, one might say.

If accuracy is a fundamental epistemic value, I suspect one must be an epistemic Kantian if one wants to collapse the distinction between apparent and objective epistemic reasons. The only other option is to insist that rationality has fundamental epistemic value. But I think it is clear that we care about epistemic rationality because we care about accuracy. It is better to agree that accuracy is the fundamental epistemic value but to adopt a Kantian view about its value. This is an internalist way to make epistemology truth-oriented.

This view might be defensible. But clearly, it will take something radical to collapse the distinction between apparent and objective epistemic reasons. Such radical views have yet to be defended. Accordingly, work remains for those who want to collapse the distinction between epistemic rationality and justification.

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