

A New Problem for Internalism

CHAD CARMICHAEL

Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis

crcarmic@iupui.edu

Abstract

I will argue that internalism about justification entails the apparently absurd conclusion that it is possible to know specific facts about the external world—for example, that there is a tree in the quad—on the basis of introspection and *a priori* reflection. After a brief characterization of internalism (§1), I will set out the problem (§2). I will then discuss three replies: one that denies the form of doxastic voluntarism involved in the problem (§3), one that denies that knowledge of higher-order facts about justification can justify corresponding first-order beliefs (§4), and, finally, one that involves biting the bullet (§5). I will argue that each reply fails.

1. The Target

Let's say that:

S knows *p* on the basis of reflection iff_{df} S knows *p* either *a priori* or on the basis of introspection.

Some internalists—for example Chisholm and BonJour—hold that when one is justified in believing something, one is in a position to know this on the basis of reflection.¹ But other

¹ See Chisholm (1989, p. 7) and BonJour (2003, p. 175). Ginet (1975, pp. 32-33), Steup (1999), Smithies (2012), and Hasan (2020) endorse similar views.

internalists may balk at this strong claim. For example, among the weakest forms of internalism is *mentalism*, which is the thesis that:

- (M) Two subjects cannot differ with respect to whether they are justified in believing p unless they differ with respect to their (non-factive) mental states.²

Some mentalists may resist Chisholm and Bonjour's view on the grounds that not all the relevant mental states are reflectively accessible in every case. Others might worry that, even if the subject has reflective access to the mental states that justify p, nevertheless the subject may not have reflective access to the justificatory status of p because he does not have access to the fact that those mental states justify belief in p. Additionally, some mentalists may object to the sort of view Chisholm and Bonjour hold on the grounds that it implausibly rules out justified beliefs among cognitively unsophisticated or unreflective subjects such as small children or animals.³

In light of these worries, here is a weaker internalist thesis that will appeal, I believe, to nearly all internalists, including those mentalists who have qualms about Chisholm and Bonjour's stronger view:

- (I) In some possible case in which S has a perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad, S is in a position to know this on the basis of reflection.⁴

To see why mentalists should accept (I), consider a hyper-intelligent, concept-rich, super-epistemologist for whom all his relevant mental states are introspectively accessible. Suppose this subject has a perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad. By hypothesis, the subject is highly reflective and sophisticated, and has access to all the relevant mental states, so the mentalist's usual worries about access to justificational status do not apply. The only way for a mentalist to avoid (I) would be to claim that it is *metaphysically impossible* for such a super-epistemologist to have reflective knowledge of

² See Feldman and Conee (2001) for a defense of mentalism. Huemer (2001, pp. 178, 194fn3) also endorses the view. Mentalism is even more minimal than what Pryor (2001, p. 104) calls "Simple Internalism," according to which "whether one is justified in believing p supervenes on facts which one is in a position to know about by reflection alone." Pryor says he takes Simple Internalism to be the "most minimal internalist position".

³ Alston (1980; 1988a, pp. 277-278) raises this worry for views like Chisholm's. See Smithies (2012, pp. 4-5) and Stoutenburg (2017) for replies.

⁴ The notion of justification here is *propositional*, not *doxastic*. One can be propositionally justified in believing p whether or not one actually believes p, whereas doxastic justification applies only when the relevant proposition is justifiably *believed*.

the fact that his mental states entail that he is justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad. This view seems to require that the entailment can only be known to hold on the basis of external, non-mental factors of a sort that are not even possibly accessible to reflection. Such a view would be a version of externalism, so mentalists, who are internalists, should accept (I).

Moreover, while Feldman and Conee (2001, pp. 11-13)—the standard-bearers for mentalism—argue against the idea that reflective access to justificatory status is a *requirement* for justification, nevertheless they are plausibly committed to the *possibility* of such access. For it is clear enough that, in the above case of the super-epistemologist, the subject can know of his perceptual experience by introspection. And, in their (2008, pp. 97-98), Conee and Feldman present an account of the support relation according to which, for an experience to on balance support a given proposition is for there to be coherence among various propositions. Such coherence is plausibly reflectively accessible, at least for our super-epistemologist.⁵ So, on their view (where p = the proposition that there is a tree in the quad), the subject S in our example has reflective access to the fact that:

- (1) S has evidence (a perceptual experience) that on balance supports p.

But, in the same work (p. 83), they endorse an evidentialist theory of justification according to which:

- (2) If S's evidence on balance supports p, then S is justified in believing p.

Their commitment to evidentialism is *a priori*.⁶ Thus, if (2) is true, then our super-epistemologist S can know that it is true *a priori*. This *a priori* knowledge of (2) would plausibly be compatible with his knowledge of (1). It follows that S may know (1) and (2) reflectively, and he may infer from this reflective knowledge that he is justified in believing p. Thus, Conee and Feldman are committed to (I).

⁵ Of course, as above, they could point out that the relevant coherence relation will often not be accessible for human subjects who are unsophisticated, inattentive, or whose relevant mental states are unconscious or dispositional. But (I) requires only a *possible* subject, such as our super-epistemologist, for whom these concerns do not arise.

⁶ They characterize evidentialism in slightly different ways in different places, but the arguments for the view, however formulated, are always of an *a priori* character. See for example the essays in their (2004) collection.

What should *externalists* say about (I)? Consider what Goldman and Beddor (2016) say about the paradigmatically externalist theory of justification, reliabilism:

What is direct accessibility? Roughly, it means knowability by some introspective or reflective method ... Given these definitions, it is pretty obvious that reliabilism must be a variety of externalism, because it holds that being caused by a reliable process is a (*prima facie*) justifier of a belief. But being reliably caused is neither a (pure) mental state nor something directly accessible in the intended sense.

Now suppose that (I) is true. And consider the possible case mentioned by (I), in which a subject is perceptually justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad, and can know reflectively that he is justified. This reflective knowledge is plausibly compatible with reflective knowledge of reliabilism *itself*. So it follows that our subject could be in a position to know, reflectively, that his belief in the tree was caused by a reliable process. Goldman and Beddor say in the above passage that being caused by a reliable process is not “directly accessible in the intended sense.” I take this to be equivalent to the claim that *it is not possible* for someone to know such a fact on the basis of reflection. Thus, reliabilism, as they see it anyway, is committed to the denial of (I).⁷

It seems to me that this is what externalists generally *should* say: if we are going to count mentalism as a (quite minimal) form of internalism, and we are going to allow internalists to say that relevant mental states can be inaccessible in some cases, the externalist needs to embrace the idea that justification is a matter of some factors that are *impossible* to access reflectively. In any case, this is how I will understand the matter here, and if this means that a few philosophers who call themselves “externalists” are subject to my argument, then so much the worse for their views.

⁷ Fumerton (1995) suggests that internalism cannot be captured by means of a “possibility of access requirement” of the sort I have proposed. His complaint about such an approach is that reliabilists should recognize a (nomological) possibility in which “evolution found a need for humans to have reliable second-level beliefs and so ‘programmed’ us to believe that a process is reliable only when it is” (p. 112). I agree with Fumerton that such “programming” is nomologically possible. But I deny that the resulting access would amount to *reflective* access to the sorts of facts that externalists see as conferring justification. To suggest otherwise is to claim—absurdly in my view—that reflective access to the external world is possible after all.

2. The Problem

Suppose that (I) is true. According to (I), there is a possible case in which a subject has a perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad, and the subject is in a position to reflectively know that he is justified. Let's look at a concrete case like this. Suppose I am the subject.⁸ And let it be an ordinary case of perceptual justification: I am attentively looking out the window at the tree in the quad, my cognitive and perceptual systems are not malfunctioning, the light is good, there really is a tree in the quad at which I am looking, and so on.⁹ Since the perceptual justification in question is propositional, not doxastic, it does not require my actual belief in the proposition. So suppose that, despite the presence of this propositional justification, I initially suspend judgment about whether there is a tree in the quad (see §3 for more on whether this suspension of belief is possible).¹⁰ Although I do not yet believe that there is a tree in the quad, I am nevertheless (propositionally) justified in believing this. Specifically, I am justified in believing this (though again: I do not yet actually believe it) on the basis of my perceptual experience. Throughout the present example, my perceptual experience continues to provide this propositional justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad. But at no point do I base any belief to that effect on my perceptual experience, and in that sense I never rely upon that perceptual justification.

Given (I), I am in a position to know, on the basis of reflection, that I am propositionally justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad. Accordingly, suppose that I come to reflectively know:

(#) I am justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad.

⁸ Perhaps I cannot be the subject due to necessary limits on human psychology. If so, we could run the argument on Marvin, an otherworldly, non-human, super-epistemologist who lacks human limitations, has all the requisite concepts, and is maximally reflective.

⁹ I am assuming that in such a case one would be justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad. Some internalists, such as Fumerton (1995), may stop the argument here by embracing skepticism. Skeptics are free to regard my overall conclusion as conditional on the rejection of skepticism.

¹⁰ It is important that in this example I entertain no doubts about the reliability of perception, since entertaining such doubts might introduce what Bergmann (2004, p. 718) calls a "questioned source context" in which "the subject has doubt or is uncertain about" the trustworthiness of a relevant source of belief. Introduction of such a context might cause trouble for some things I say below, so I am stipulating that the case is not like this. Instead, we may suppose that the subject is motivated not by doubt, but by *curiosity* about whether he can provide a reflective justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad.

Here it is important to stress that this knowledge is *reflective*, not perceptual, as guaranteed by (I) itself. Perhaps it is possible to come to know (#) perceptually; (I) assures us that it is *also* possible to know (#) reflectively, and that is the sort of case I am focused on here.

Having come to this bit of reflective knowledge, suppose that I now form a belief that there is a tree in the quad, but that I do so on the basis of my reflective knowledge of (#), rather than on the basis of my perceptual experience of the tree. My newly formed belief is (now doxastically) justified, not by my perceptual experience, but on the basis of my reflective knowledge of (#). (For those who doubt that this is possible, I provide three arguments in §4 for the claim that reflective knowledge of (#) can serve as a justifying basis for the belief that there is a tree in the quad.) So I am justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection.

It is implausible that it is possible to be justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection. The fact that (I) leads to this conclusion therefore casts doubt on (I). But suppose you are willing to bite the bullet and agree that it is possible to be justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection. Still, it gets worse. Consider this claim:

(JK) If S is justified in believing p on basis B, and all goes well, then S knows p on basis B.

By ‘all goes well’ here, I mean that the subject forms the belief, the belief is true, and external circumstances are ideal: there are no Gettier-like conditions, and no skeptical scenarios obtain.¹¹ I stipulate that all goes well in the situation at hand. (JK) is quite plausible: counterexamples to the JTB analysis of knowledge always involve a situation in which it is not true that all goes well. Thus, given that I am justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection, together with (JK) and my stipulation that all goes well, we get:

I know that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection.

¹¹ I borrow ‘all goes well’ from Bengson (2015, p. 735); I use it with a slightly different meaning.

This, however, is absurd: it is impossible to *know* that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection.¹² So (I) has led us to absurdity. (See §5 for more on biting the bullet.)¹³

3. Suspending Judgment

Some will deny my claim that I could have a veridical perceptual experience of a tree in the quad and yet suspend judgment about whether there is a tree in the quad. Even philosophers who have defended some form of “doxastic voluntarism”—the thesis that we have control over what we believe in some sense that renders us responsible for what we believe—have typically not wanted to claim that we have *direct* control over *these* sorts of perceptual beliefs.

Four points in response. First, although I stated my argument in terms of my own beliefs, I do not need to claim that any actual human beings have or even could have had control of this sort. Rather, I need only claim that it is *metaphysically possible* for agents who are capable of having justified beliefs and knowledge to have this sort of control. Given that the rest of my argument is correct, such possible agents would show that (I) leads to absurdity.¹⁴

Second, whereas much of the discussion of voluntarism has focused on belief *formation*, I only claim that voluntary *suspension* of belief is possible. This is important,

¹² As Gibbons (2013, p. 283) puts it, “Everyone should think that’s kind of weird.” Gibbons considers an argument that is similar to the one that I am giving, and he would reject (I) in favor of the view that the relevant higher-order belief can be justified only by the same perceptual experience that justifies the first-order belief. In rejecting (I), Gibbons would be agreeing with my point; he has other fish to fry in his discussion. Similar remarks apply to his discussion in Gibbons (2019, §1.5).

¹³ Readers familiar with McKinsey (1991) may notice similarities between the problem I am raising and McKinsey’s problem for anti-individualism about the nature of mental states. According to McKinsey, the conjunction of anti-individualism and privileged access entails the possibility of reflective knowledge of the proposition that water exists (or of some similar contingent proposition about water). I am persuaded by Brueckner’s (2007) reply to McKinsey, according to which no problematic proposition about water is reflectively deducible from anti-individualism. The relevant entailments in McKinsey’s argument are simply not reflectively knowable, but epistemically depend on empirical background assumptions about how, in fact, we gained the concept of water: assumptions like the claim that many people in our community have interacted causally with water, or the claim that water is H₂O. No analogous point holds concerning the argument I am giving.

¹⁴ Alston (1988b)—one of the classic champions of involuntarism—says that he “cannot see any sufficient reason for” the claim that this sort of voluntary belief suspension is logically impossible. Instead, he says that direct control of this sort is a “capacity we in fact lack though one we conceivably could have had” (p. 263). Plausibly, then, he does not mean to take issue with the claim that the capacity is *metaphysically possible*, and his arguments for involuntarism therefore do not bear on the problem I am raising.

since one of the main arguments advanced against doxastic voluntarism—see, most famously, Williams (1970)—is the idea that the possibility of voluntary adoption of beliefs is inconsistent with the fact that beliefs essentially “aim at truth”.¹⁵ The procedure I have described involves a subject who suspends belief, not in disregard for the truth, but in service of curiosity (see note 10) about the possibility of this sort of reflective justification. So the possibility of this procedure is untouched by a Williams-style argument.

Third, there is no necessary connection between a perceptual experience as of a tree and belief in the reality of the tree. For example, one could become aware of evidence that one’s experiences of trees have often been illusory. In such a case, confronted with a real tree, one might reasonably suspend belief. Now of course skeptical conditions of this sort do not obtain in the case I described, as they would arguably provide a defeater for any reflective justification that the subject could offer, undermining my argument that internalists must admit that the subject’s belief is reflectively justified. However, the skeptical example still reinforces an important point: because the skeptical conditions are possible, and they show that there is no necessary connection between experience and belief of this sort, this raises the plausibility of the claim that it is at least *possible* for there to be a case in which conditions are ideal and the subject has a tree experience but no tree belief. The alternative is to posit a metaphysically necessary connection between having a tree experience in normal conditions, on the one hand, and believing that there is a tree, on the other. It is hard to see how to justify such a strong thesis; my own intuition tells strongly against such a connection.

Finally, although I have focused on immediate perceptual experience in my example, this is not an essential part of the argument. I could, for example, alter the case to focus on a memory of something that happened long ago. So long as the internalists I am targeting think that memory can justify beliefs, the argument will still apply. And it is plausibly metaphysically possible, even with a clear memory of some event in the distant past, to suspend judgment about whether that event really occurred.

4. Knowledge of Jp as a Basis for Belief in p

In §2, I argued that the internalist is committed to the possibility of reflective knowledge that there is a tree in the quad. A crucial step in the procedure I described for generating this reflective knowledge involved basing a belief in the existence of the tree on knowledge that one has justification for believing in the tree. I will now address the question whether

¹⁵ Williams’s argument has been subjected to some pretty strong objections. See, for example, Winters (1979), Bennett (1990), Scott-Kakures (1994), Johnston (1995), and Shah (2002).

I am correct to claim that knowledge of justification for p could really be a justifying basis for p itself. I think that this claim is plausible on its face. However, some will doubt, so in what follows I will provide three arguments for the claim.¹⁶

Argument 1. Suppose you find out that your neighbor is justified in believing that there is a rabbit in his yard. But suppose you have no idea what justifies him in believing this; you only know that he has justification. Do you thereby have a justification to believe that there is a rabbit in your neighbor's yard? Intuitively, the answer is yes: you have at least a defeasible justification for that belief. Certainly the fact that your neighbor is justified in believing this by itself raises the probability from your perspective that there is in fact a rabbit in his yard. But there is nothing special about your neighbor. If knowing that your neighbor is justified in believing something can serve as a reason for believing that thing, then we can generalize to the result that knowing that a person is justified in believing p provides defeasible justification for believing that thing. And, if this is true, then when I apply it to myself, I get my claim: knowledge that I am justified in believing p is a defeasible justification for p itself.

Argument 2. Consider a similar case in which you alone are involved. Suppose you carefully proved a theorem p yesterday, double checking your work. But now, when considering p, you cannot recall the details of your proof. You can, however, clearly recall having proven p conclusively, and indeed you know that you proved p conclusively. Thus, you know that you are justified in believing p. But you cannot bring yesterday's grounds for justification before your mind. Are you justified in believing p? It would seem that you are justified in believing p on the basis of your knowledge that you justified (proved) it yesterday. Thus, knowledge of Jp in this case is, or at least can be, your justifying basis for believing p.¹⁷

¹⁶ For example, Neta and Pritchard (2007) deny the claim. They say that in cases such as the one at hand, “since the agent’s belief that p arises out of her recognition of the support the factive empirical reason gives for the target proposition p, her belief that p will be based on this factive empirical reason” (p. 393). This section is meant to show that they are wrong: if the agent has reflective knowledge of the justification for p—and remember that the possibility of such reflective knowledge is guaranteed by (I)—then, if my arguments in this section are correct, this reflective knowledge can form a basis for belief in p itself without ever basing any belief on the relevant perceptual experience. Neta and Pritchard could adopt the view of Gibbons (2013, 2019), on which knowledge of the justification itself must be based on the relevant perceptual experience. But that would be to deny (I), conceding my point.

¹⁷ This example is similar to those offered as part of the problem of forgotten evidence for internalism. For example, see Goldman (1999, pp. 280-282). It might therefore raise red flags for internalists who are troubled by that problem. However, various internalist responses to the problem of forgotten evidence—e.g., the responses considered in Conee and Feldman (2001, pp. 8-10)—leave the point I am making unchallenged.

Argument 3. Here is a different sort of argument, which forges an *a priori* path from J_p to p , thereby revealing reflective knowledge of J_p as a possible reflective basis for believing p . Suppose I am justified in believing p . And suppose that I know this. In that case, it is a requirement of epistemic rationality that I refrain from believing not- p .¹⁸ For if it were rationally permissible in such a case to believe not- p , then it would follow that this belief is rationally permissible:

I am justified in believing p , but not- p

But this belief is not rationally permissible.¹⁹ If the whole conjunction were rationally permissible, then the fact that the second conjunct is rationally permissible would serve as a defeater for the justification mentioned in the first conjunct. Thus, either the second conjunct is rationally impermissible, or it is rationally permissible and the first conjunct is false (because the justification it reports is defeated). Thus, to believe the whole conjunction is to believe a claim that is *a priori* either irrational or false. It is not rationally permissible to believe such a claim.

Similarly, if I am justified in believing p , and I know this, then I am rationally required to refrain from suspending judgment about whether p . For suppose I know I am justified in believing p . And suppose it is nevertheless rationally permissible to suspend judgment about whether p . Then it would follow in the same way as before (*mutatis mutandis*) that this belief is rationally permissible:

(*) I am justified in believing p , but I suspend judgment about whether p .

And, similarly, (*) is self-evidently not rationally permissible.²⁰ Moreover, as before, one may argue that (*) is not rationally permissible. For, as before, if the whole conjunction were rationally permissible, then the fact that the second conjunct is rationally permissible would serve as a defeater for the justification mentioned in the first conjunct. This may be less obvious in this case than in the previous case. Does the fact that it is rationally permissible for me to suspend judgment about whether p defeat a justification I might hold

¹⁸ Throughout, talk of rational requirements (rational permissibility, etc.) is meant to be understood as referring to the requirements of *epistemic* rationality, as opposed to *practical* rationality.

¹⁹ Those who accept views that are similar to this include Scanlon (1998, p. 25; 2007, p. 99), Smithies (2012, p. 11), Broome (2013, §§9.5, 16.2), Gibbons (2013, p. 261), Littlejohn (2018, p. 258), and Greco (2014, p. 211). Horowitz (2014) is somewhat less committal, but includes a persuasive criticism of several specific “level-splitting views” according to which first-order doxastic states and higher-order beliefs about justification can fail to cohere.

²⁰ The authors cited in note 19 are also sympathetic to this claim.

for *p*? I think so. To see why, consider a case in which you are looking at a real barn in broad daylight. You recognize that you have a perceptual justification for believing that there is a barn there. But now someone presents to you non-conclusive but substantial evidence which renders it a serious possibility that you are in fake barn country. This makes it rationally permissible for you to suspend judgment about whether the thing you are looking at is a real barn. Are you now justified in believing that there is a barn there? It would seem not: the inconclusive evidence which makes the suspension of belief rationally permissible also defeats your perceptual justification. And what's true in this case seems to be true generally. From here, the argument goes through as before.²¹

One might object that this result undercuts my original argument. For, in the procedure described in §2, the agent suspends judgment in the face of a clear perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad. And so, given what I am now arguing, wouldn't that perceptual justification be defeated by the suspension of belief? No. The suspension of belief in my original case is plainly not rationally permissible: you are not rationally permitted to suspend judgment about whether there is a tree in the quad when you are looking directly at a tree in ideal circumstances, as in the case I described. So, since this suspension is *not* rationally permissible, its rational permissibility does not undercut anything. Could the fact that the suspension is not rationally permissible somehow cause problems for the subsequent reflective justification that I derive from internalism? No. Such violations do not generally defeat subsequent reflective justifications. For example, if you irrationally believe in Santa, reflective knowledge of this fact is not defeated by the irrationality of the belief.

Summing up: if I am justified in believing *p*, then I am rationally required to refrain both from believing not-*p* and from suspending judgment about whether *p*. But I must either believe *p*, believe not-*p*, or suspend judgment about whether *p*. Thus, since I realize all of this, it follows that I am rationally required to believe *p* in the case at hand. The fact that I am rationally required to believe *p* is a conclusive epistemic reason for believing *p*. Thus, from the assumption that I know I am justified in believing *p*, I arrive *a priori* at a conclusive epistemic reason to believe *p*. My knowledge of my justification for believing *p* thus serves as a justifying basis for my belief in *p*.

²¹ For additional support, see Raleigh (2021). Raleigh argues that for *S* to suspend belief about whether *p* is just for *S* to believe that *S* is unable to tell whether *p*. This supports my view. For suppose that Raleigh's account is right. It is plausible that, if *p* is true, and if you are justified in believing *p*, then you can tell whether *p*. In the case at hand, you are justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad, and indeed there is a tree in the quad. So, on Raleigh's account, to suspend belief in this case is to believe that you cannot tell whether there is a tree in the quad, when in fact you can tell this. I expect that internalists will see this as rationally impermissible.

5. Biting the Bullet

The next reply I will consider simply accepts the conclusion of my argument, that one can know that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection. An approach of this sort owes us an explanation of why this conclusion seems false.

One such explanation is as follows. When I come to reflectively know that there is a tree in the quad by following the procedure laid out in §2, a key part of that procedure is that I depend on introspection to justify knowledge that I have a perceptual justification, which at least arguably entails that I have had a perceptual experience. Thus, the procedure in this sense depends on a step which entails that I have had a perceptual experience. Though I do not *rely* on this experience in an epistemic sense—I base no belief on it—nevertheless one step of the procedure does entail that there has been such a perceptual experience. Thus, perhaps the bullet biter can say that, when the claim that one can have reflective knowledge that there is a tree in the quad seems false to us, this is because we are mixing up this claim, which on the present view turns out to be true, with the false claim that one can know that there is a tree in the quad *without having had a perceptual experience of the tree*.

Here is an obvious problem with this explanation. It is uncontroversial that I can know reflectively (by introspection) whether I am appeared to redly, even if color concepts have their origins in perceptual experience. And it is uncontroversial that I can know *a priori* that triangles have three angles, even if the idea of a triangle has its origin in perceptual experience. Neither of these claims of reflective knowledge seems false. And yet the present strategy predicts that these claims should seem false, since, in both cases, the relevant reflective knowledge plausibly entails that I had a perceptual experience of the right sort.

Let's try another explanation of why it seems false that we can know reflectively that there is a tree in the quad. First, a preliminary. Recall that, as I described the situation with the tree in the quad, my reflective knowledge of the tree is (in part) based on my reflective knowledge of (#):

(#) I am justified in believing that there is a tree in the quad.

As I argued, (#) forms the basis for my belief that there is a tree in the quad, and thus becomes the basis of the ultimate doxastic justification for my belief. At this point, an objector might note that (#) is true because I have a normal perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad. As I told the story, I never *rely* on this normal perceptual justification, but it is nevertheless initially the justification in virtue of which (#) is true. In this sense, the existence of a perceptual justification does play a role in the

argument. Specifically, as I described the case, my reflective knowledge of (#) is the basis for my belief that there is a tree in the quad, but (#) is true in virtue of the fact that there is a perceptual justification—one that is never relied upon—for that very belief.

This suggests the following bullet-biting explanation of our anti-reflective-knowledge intuition. When the claim that one can have reflective knowledge that there is a tree in the quad seems false to us, this is because we are mixing up this claim, which on the present view turns out to be true, with the false claim that one can know that there is a tree in the quad without that knowledge in some way *depending* on the fact that there is a perceptual justification for the belief. This explanation differs subtly from the previous one: on this explanation, what is important is that the reflective justification I base my belief on depends, not merely on having a perceptual *experience*, but on the availability of a perceptual *justification* for the very belief at issue.

This explanation also runs into trouble. Suppose I look at a tomato. Suppose I judge on the basis of introspection that I am appeared to redly. In such a case, a perceptual justification for my judgment is also available: I know perceptually that there is a red object here, that I am looking at it with my eyes open, and so on. Those perceptions justify my belief that I'm appeared to redly. And the reflective justification *depends*, at least counterfactually, on the existence of this perceptual justification: if I weren't looking at a tomato, I would not have the reflective justification. And yet there is no temptation to say that I cannot know reflectively that I am appeared to redly in this case.

Perhaps someone will reply that the dependence in the tomato case is counterfactual, while the dependence in the case involving the tree in the quad is not merely counterfactual, but something more like a *grounding* or *truth-making* relationship. Here the thought is that not only is it true that, if I had no perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad, then I would not have a reflective justification; it is also true that a certain step in the reflective justification—namely, my belief in (#)—is *made true by* or *grounded in* the fact that I have a perceptual justification for believing that there is a tree in the quad. This, it might be held, is a relevant difference: on this view, when we report the intuition that one cannot have reflective knowledge of the tree, we are misspeaking, and we should say that *you cannot have such reflective knowledge without relying on a step that is made true by or grounded in the existence of a perceptual justification*. The tomato case is not a counterexample to this claim.

There are, however, other counterexamples to the proposed explanation, at least by the internalist's lights. For suppose that I have a perceptual justification for the claim that there is a tree in the quad. And suppose I am the subject mentioned in (I). Then, according to the internalist, I can reflectively know that I have a perceptual justification for the claim that there is a tree in the quad. Suppose that I gain this reflective knowledge, and I directly infer

from this reflective knowledge *that I exist*. The reflective justification for the claim that I exist, in this case, depends on a premise which is made true by or grounded in the existence of a perceptual justification. And yet there is no anti-reflective knowledge intuition in this case. The present bullet-biting approach predicts such an intuition, so the present approach fails.

Finally, here is last attempt at an explanation. Perhaps when I report that it seems false that I can know reflectively that there is a tree in the quad, I am misspeaking, and what I should have said is that I cannot know *directly* and reflectively that there is a tree in the quad. The procedure for generating reflective knowledge that I described produces *indirect* (i.e., inferential) reflective knowledge of the existence of the tree in the quad—specifically, the knowledge is produced by an inference from *a priori* and introspective beliefs, so, on this view, the resulting knowledge does not violate the intuition I *should* have reported.

I find this reply psychologically unrealistic. I understand the difference between direct and indirect justification well enough, and, when I consider the question whether I can *indirectly* know that there is a tree in the quad on the basis of reflection, it seems to me that I cannot. So I am unsatisfied by this explanation. But I am inclined to leave the matter here: if internalism requires us to embrace the conclusion that we can have indirect reflective knowledge of the external world, that is a surprising result, and I suspect not a result that many internalists will find congenial.

Acknowledgements Thanks to David James Barnett, John Bengson, Dan Korman, John Tilley, and several anonymous referees.

Funding Work on this paper was made possible by a generous sabbatical leave at my home institution, IUPUI.

References

- Alston, William. 1980. Level-Confusions in Epistemology. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 5.1:135-150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.1980.tb00401.x>
- Alston, William. 1988a. An Internalist Externalism. *Synthese* 74.3: 265-283. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00869630>
- Alston, William. 1988b. The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification. *Philosophical Perspectives* 2: 257-299. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2214077>
- Bengson, John. 2015. The Intellectual Given. *Mind* 124.495: 707-760. <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzv029>

- Bennett, Jonathan. 1990. Why is Belief Involuntary? *Analysis* 50.2:87-107.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/50.2.87>
- Bergmann, Michael. 2004. Epistemic Circularity: Malignant and Benign. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69.3:709-727. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2004.tb00524.x>
- BonJour, Lawrence. 2003. A Version of Internalist Foundationalism. In Ernest Sosa and Lawrence BonJour, *Epistemic Justification: Internalism vs. Externalism, Foundations vs. Virtues*, Oxford University Press.
- Broome, John. 2013. *Rationality Through Reasoning*. Wiley-Blackwell.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118609088>
- Brueckner, Anthony. 2007. Externalism and Privileged Access are Consistent. In Brian P. McLaughlin and Jonathan Cohen (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Philosophy of Mind*. Blackwell. 37-52. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199585861.003.0023>
- Chisholm, Roderick. 1989. *Theory of Knowledge*, 3rd ed. Prentice Hall.
- Conee, Earl and Richard Feldman. 2004. *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199253722.001.0001>
- Conee, Earl and Richard Feldman. 2008. Evidence. In Quentin Smith (ed.), *Epistemology: New Essays*. Oxford University Press. 83-104.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199264933.003.0005>
- Feldman, Richard and Earl Conee. 2001. Internalism Defended. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 38.1: 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199253722.003.0004>
- Fumerton, Richard. 1995. *Metaepistemology and Skepticism*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gibbons, John. 2013. *The Norm of Belief*. Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199673391.001.0001>
- Gibbons, John. 2019. Introspecting Knowledge. *Philosophical Studies* 176.2: 559-579.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-017-1028-9>
- Ginet, Carl. 1975. *Knowledge, Perception, and Memory*. D. Reidel.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-010-9451-1>
- Goldman, Alvin. 1999. Internalism Exposed. *The Journal of Philosophy* 96.6: 271-293.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2564679>
- Goldman, Alvin and Bob Beddor. 2016. Reliabilist Epistemology. In Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Greco, Daniel. 2014. A Puzzle about Epistemic Akrasia. *Philosophical Studies* 167.2: 201-219. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-012-0085-3>
- Hasan, Ali. 2020. The Grounds of Knowledge must be Accessible. In Steven B. Cowan (ed.), *Problems in Epistemology and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Contemporary Debates*. Bloomsbury Academic. 97-107.

- Horowitz, Sophie. 2014. Epistemic Akrasia. *Nous* 48.4:718-744.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/nous.12026>
- Huemer, Michael. 2001. *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Johnston, Mark. 1995. Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind. In Cynthia MacDonald and Graham MacDonald (eds.), *Philosophy of Psychology*. Blackwell. 63-91.
- Littlejohn, Clayton. 2018. Stop Making Sense? On a Puzzle about Rationality. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 96.2: 257-275.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/phpr.12271>
- McKinsey, Michael. 1991. Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access. *Analysis* 51.1: 9-16. <https://doi.org/10.1093/analys/51.1.9>
- Neta, Ram and Duncan Prichard. 2007. McDowell and the New Evil Genius. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74.2: 381-396. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2007.00023.x>
- Pryor, James. 2001. Highlights of Recent Epistemology. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 52.1: 95-124. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjps/52.1.95>
- Raleigh, Thomas. 2021. Suspending is Believing. *Synthese* 198: 2449-2474.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-019-02223-8>
- Scanlon, T. M. 1998. *What We Owe to Each Other*. Harvard University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv134vmrn>
- Scanlon, T. M. 2007. Structural Irrationality. In Geoffrey Brennan, Robert Goodin, Frank Jackson and Michael Smith (eds.), *Common Minds: Themes from the Philosophy of Philip Pettit*. Oxford University Press. 84-103.
- Scott-Kakures, Dion. 1994. On Belief and Captivity of the Will. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 54.1: 77-103. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2108356>
- Shah, Nishi. 2002. Clearing Space for Doxastic Voluntarism. *The Monist* 85.3:436-445.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/monist200285326>
- Smithies, Declan. 2012. Moore's Paradox and the Accessibility of Justification. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85.2: 273-300.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1933-1592.2011.00506.x>
- Steup, Matthias. 1999. A Defense of Internalism. In Louis Pojman (ed.), *The Theory of Knowledge: Classical and Contemporary Readings, 2nd ed.* Wadsworth. 373-384.
- Stoutenburg, Gregory. 2017. Think of the Children! Epistemic Justification and Cognitively Unsophisticated Subjects. *American Philosophical Quarterly* 98.S1: 29-50. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papq.12144>
- Williams, Bernard. 1970. Deciding to Believe. In Bernard Williams (ed.), *Problems of the Self*. Cambridge University Press. 136-151.

Winters, Barbara. 1970. Believing at Will. *The Journal of Philosophy* 76.5:243-256.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2025880>