

CHAPTER I

Introduction

I.1 INTRODUCTION

Justified beliefs are justified because they have been sprayed with some sort of justificatory fluid.¹ Epistemologists want to know what this fluid is made of. Is it made entirely from conditions internal to you and your perspective on the world or might it include some external conditions (e.g., truth, knowledge, causal relations between you and your surroundings, etc.)? The internalists insist that justification depends exclusively upon conditions internal to you. Externalists deny this. When you survey the vast literature dedicated to the debate between the internalists and externalists, you might start to sympathize with the pessimists who think this dispute will never be resolved. Both sides offer plausible arguments, but neither side makes a compelling case. I think recent work on epistemic value, the ontology of reasons, and epistemic norms gives us good reason to think we can bring this dispute to a close.

I defend an unorthodox externalist view. To justifiably believe something, it is not enough to fit your belief to your evidence, put your trust in reliable methods, or keep your virtue intact. You can only justifiably believe something when your reasons show you are right. In justifying an action, you have to show that the agent acted rightly. If she committed any wrongs, she did so with sufficient reason. In justifying a belief, you have to show that the subject did not violate any epistemic norms without sufficient reason. If the norms governing belief enjoin you to believe only what is true, only true beliefs can be justified. If justification required anything less than this, justification ascriptions could not identify those beliefs that are fit for deliberation and so it would be obscure what exactly justification ascriptions are for.

¹ Field 1998, p. 7.

This clashes with the orthodox view, which has long been that justification differs from knowledge in two significant respects. The first is that you can justifiably believe falsehoods if you have solid evidence for your beliefs, but you can never know what is not true.² Knowledge is factive, but justification is not. The second is that the accidental connections between belief and truth that are the grist for Gettier's mill undermine knowledge without undermining justification. Naturally, if justified beliefs do not have to be true, they do not have to be non-accidentally true.

Suppose the orthodox view is right and justification requires neither truth nor a non-accidental connection to truth. If you could factor justification from these other conditions, what would the point of justification be? One possibility might be that justified belief is something you can aim at when you know that knowledge on some matter is unattainable. If so, this might tell us how we ought to engage in doxastic deliberation. Rather than aim for knowledge, we can aim lower. This appears to be Wright's view:

[K]nowledge is not really the proper central concern of epistemologico-sceptical enquiry. There is not necessarily any lasting discomfort in the claim that, contrary to our preconceptions, we have no genuine knowledge in some broad area of our thought – say in the area of theoretical science. We can live with the concession that we do not, strictly, know some of the things we believed ourselves to know, provided we can retain the thought that we are fully justified in accepting them. That concession is what we might call the Russellian Retreat. For Russell ... proposed that such is exactly the message which philosophical epistemology generally has for us: we must content ourselves with probability, defeasibility and inconclusive justifications where standardly we had wanted to claim more. What, however, is not tolerable is the thesis that, among propositions about, for instance, the material world, other minds, or the past, we never actually attain to genuinely justified opinion; that no real distinction corresponds to that which we are accustomed to draw between grounded and ungrounded beliefs, earned information and mere prejudice or dogma.³

I think this is a mistake. If you could beat out a Russellian Retreat, you could justifiably believe what you knew you were in no position to know. I think this is impossible.⁴ Consider: Custer died at Little Big Horn, but I do not know that he did. Even if I could believe such a thing (which I

² Alston declares that “by common consent, justification is distinct from truth ... false beliefs can be justified” (1993, p. 535).

³ Wright 1991, p. 88.

⁴ For a dissenting view, see McGlynn in press.

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doubt), I doubt that I could *rationally* believe such a thing. Since the difference between knowledge and justified belief is counterprivate, you can never see yourself as being in a position to justifiably believe what you know you do not know.⁵ It is impossible to retreat without abandoning belief, so the point of justification cannot be to steer us towards a more easily attainable goal than knowledge.

The orthodox view is not committed to the idea that it is possible to tell in any particular case that you could justifiably believe what you cannot know, so it is not committed to the possibility of a Russellian Retreat. It simply says that it is possible to have justification without knowledge. There is a difference between believing and believing correctly even if this difference is counterprivate. If the difference between knowledge and justification is counterprivate it can play no role in doxastic deliberation. We know what the point of justification is not, but not what it is.

Let's try a different tack. Even if you cannot tell with respect to anything you currently believe that you do not know you are right, you can look back on beliefs you no longer hold and ask whether they were justified. If you discovered that the reason you mistakenly thought that there was an owl outside your window was that you were hallucinating, you might think to yourself:

[G]iven the vivid hallucination, I am in no way at fault for believing what I do, nor do I deserve criticism. Far from it. I am like a surgeon who skillfully does all that can be expected but loses the patient. There I should feel regret, but not guilt; I should explain, but need not apologize; and when we know what my evidence was, we approve of what I did; *we consider it reasonable*.⁶

You can say that when you discover that you did not know what you thought you knew that you do not deserve criticism, that you cannot be faulted, and perhaps that you can be praised for the way you formed your beliefs. Can this really be all there is to justification, that you can take some consolation in having had it when you discover you were wrong? Certainly not. That is what excuses do. They show you in a positive light without giving you a justification.⁷ You look for justifications to determine what to believe and believe with justification when you properly respond

⁵ See Adler 2002a; Huemer 2007b; Sorensen 1988; and Williamson 2000a.

⁶ Audi 2001, p. 23.

⁷ Following Austin 1956, many writers would say that excuses exculpate without showing the agent or the agent's conduct in a positive light. For reasons discussed below, we should think that some excuses exculpate only by showing that the agent did what could be reasonably expected of them.

to the reasons that apply to you. You do not reach for a justification only after you discover that mistakes were made.

The point of a justification is not to distinguish knowledge from ignorance, it is not to lift you up when you are feeling blue, and it is not a consolation prize awarded to the virtuous for their mistakes. Justifications show that you were in the right. You have a justification when you meet your obligations, but not if you do not. In the passage quoted above, Audi's suggestion might have been that the proper way to show that you met your responsibilities is by showing that you believed what any reasonable and responsible person would if they were in your situation. If so, we disagree about the marks of permissibility and justification, but we still might agree that the point of a justification is to distinguish what would be right or permissible from what would not be.

Suppose this is right and that justification is a deontological notion, not in the sense that your justified beliefs are blamelessly held or in the sense that your justified beliefs are beliefs you should be praised for holding, but in the sense that your justified beliefs are the beliefs you can have while meeting your epistemic obligations.⁸ I fear that the orthodox view cannot do justice to this point about the point of justification, because the orthodox view insists that the truth-condition and the anti-luck conditions required for knowledge have nothing to do with justification. This implies that your epistemic obligation has nothing to do with seeing to it that your beliefs satisfy these conditions. This is a mistake. As such, the orthodox view either undermines the idea that the point of a justification is to show what it takes to meet your obligations and respond rightly to the reasons that apply to you, or reflects a mistaken view as to what epistemic duty requires. Obviously, this is something that I have to defend, but I shall argue that you can only meet your epistemic obligations when you believe the truth. Knowledge and justification are distinct statuses, but both require cognitive success.

⁸ Zimmerman distinguishes hypological judgments from deontological judgments. The former have to do with laudability and culpability whereas the latter have to do with right, wrong, and obligation. I very much doubt that the hypological can be reduced to the deontological or the deontological to the hypological. As such, those who say that justification is a deontological notion should not say that justified beliefs are beliefs we are either not culpable for holding or which we can be lauded for holding until they can show that these reductions are possible. See Zimmerman 2002 for discussion.

1.2 KNOWLEDGE AND JUSTIFICATION

This discussion focuses primarily on justification and whether it is an externalist notion, not on knowledge. The term ‘Externalism’ first found its way into the epistemological literature in a discussion of an externalist account of knowledge, an account on which knowledge can involve natural relations between you and your surroundings (e.g., causal relations between your perceptual beliefs and the states of affairs that determine whether your beliefs are true).⁹ Assuming that it is possible to justifiably believe something without knowing that it is true, Externalism about knowledge is compatible with Internalism about justification.¹⁰ Externalists about knowledge who think justification is an internalist notion can either say that justification is a component of knowledge that depends wholly upon what is internal to us or deny that knowledge requires justification. Since my views concerning knowledge and justification are somewhat unorthodox, I should take a moment to explain how I take these notions to be related.

Consider two questions:

Q1: Is it possible to have knowledge without justification?

Q2: Is it possible to have justification without knowledge?

To answer these questions properly, we need to distinguish between three kinds of justification ascription:

Personal justification: S is justified in believing *p*.

Doxastic justification: S’s belief that *p* is justified/S justifiably believes *p*.

Propositional justification: S has a justification for believing *p*/There is a justification for S to believe *p*.

Ascriptions of personal justification tell us something about a believer – whether *she* is justified in believing. An ascription of doxastic justification tells us something about a belief – whether *the belief* is justifiably held. An ascription of propositional justification tells us something about a proposition – whether *the proposition* is such that there is sufficient justification for someone to believe it. There is not to my knowledge a standard view about how these ascriptions are related, but there is a common practice of treating personal and doxastic justification as interchangeable. It is a

⁹ Kornblith 2001 notes that Armstrong 1973 was the first to describe his views as ‘externalist’.

¹⁰ See Audi 1993.

mistake to treat these notions as interchangeable even if, as seems to be the case, the mistake is usually quite harmless.

I think Lowy was the first to recognize the importance of the distinction between personal and doxastic justification. Some of Gettier's critics thought that his cases were not counterexamples to the traditional analysis of knowledge because they thought beliefs inferred from false beliefs were not justified.¹¹ These concerns were irrelevant, she said, because the notion Gettier was interested in was that of a person being justified in believing a proposition, not the notion of a belief that is justified:

To get at Gettier's notion of justification, we might then ask, when is a person justified in believing something in such a way that Gettier's points about justification apply? A person is justified in believing a proposition when no more can reasonably be expected of him with respect to finding out whether that proposition is true. Clearly, Gettier's points about justification hold here: there can be cases where no more can reasonably be expected of a person as a truth-seeker with respect to some proposition, and yet the proposition be false.¹²

If this is what personal justification comes to, there must be more to doxastic justification than just personal justification. It is possible for a truth-seeker to do all that could be reasonably expected of him and still fail to meet his epistemic obligations. This is a point on which internalists and externalists should agree. As Conee and Feldman observe, you might do all that can be reasonably expected of you and still form beliefs that do not fit your evidence. So long as you are clear that evaluating the subject's beliefs is not simply a matter of evaluating the person that holds them, there is no reason to think that doxastic justification reduces to evaluations of the believer.¹³ This distinction between personal and doxastic justification matters for our purposes for two reasons. First, while I think some of Gettier's critics were right that his cases were not cases of doxastic justification without knowledge, Gettier and Lowy were right that his cases were cases of personal justification without knowledge. As such, Gettier was right that a person could be justified in believing some true proposition without knowing that the proposition is true.¹⁴ Second, externalists can accommodate internalist intuitions by conceding that

¹¹ See Dreher 1974 and Thalberg 1969, for example.

¹² Lowy 1978, p. 106.

¹³ Conee and Feldman 2004, p. 85.

¹⁴ Fogelin 1994 seems to think that if a person is justified in believing *p* and justifiably believes *p*, this person will know *p*. I do not think that there is any JTB account of knowledge that can accommodate our intuitions.

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personal justification is an internalist notion while insisting that doxastic justification is not.¹⁵

The personal/doxastic justification distinction is analogous to the act/agent distinction in ethics. You can be fully excused for wrongdoing when you are non-culpably ignorant of some fact or acting on a mistaken belief, so knowing that you are morally upstanding and your actions reflect well on you does not show that your actions conformed to morality's demands. Moreover, your actions can conform to morality's demand even if you act from selfish motives and your actions are not a credit to you or a sign of good character.¹⁶ In general, I think it is helpful to think of justifications as defenses. To understand personal, doxastic, and propositional justification, we need to understand what is involved in defending persons, particular beliefs, and prospective beliefs. To defend a person who believes *p* is to show that the way she forms her beliefs shows her in a positive light. When we see how she forms her beliefs, we can see that she is epistemically responsible. To defend her beliefs, however, is to show that her beliefs conform to the norms governing belief.

How are these different kinds of justification ascription related? It seems plausible that you can justifiably believe *p* only if you have a justification for believing *p* and that justification plays some role in explaining why you believe what you do. It certainly seems that Cooper contradicts himself if he says that Harry's belief in Leo's guilt is perfectly justified while insisting that there is no justification whatever for Harry to believe that Leo is guilty. The standard view is that doxastic justification involves propositional justification and proper basing. To justifiably believe *p*, you have to have a justification to believe *p* and it has to be the reason for which you believe what you do. While doxastic justification suffices for personal justification, the converse is not true. There can be sufficient justification for you to believe things you do not believe, but you cannot justifiably believe what you do not believe.

Some maintain that personal and doxastic justification ascriptions are logically equivalent.¹⁷ I think this is a mistake. While Harry's beliefs cannot be justified if Harry is not justified in holding them, it is possible for

¹⁵ Bach 1985; Engel 1992a; and Fogelin 1994 try to accommodate intuitions about cases of systematic deception by saying that you can be personally justified in believing something even if your belief is not justified.

¹⁶ For a helpful discussion of the relation between act and agent evaluations, see Bennett 1995; M. Moore 1997; Stocker 1973; Thomson 1991; and Zimmerman 1996.

¹⁷ Kvanvig and Menzel 1990. Alston 1989 also denies that there is any important distinction between a person being justified in a belief and a belief being justified for a person.

Harry to be justified in believing something even if Harry's beliefs are not justified. A person is justified in her beliefs if she can be held responsible for her beliefs and cannot be blamed for any breach of epistemic duty. That is to say, a person is justified in her beliefs if she pursues her epistemic ends responsibly and can rationally take it that she has met her epistemic obligations. A belief, however, is justified iff it is permissibly held. You can be excused if you do not meet your epistemic obligations, but you cannot justifiably fail to meet your obligations. Whereas personal justification requires nothing more than an excuse, doxastic justification requires permissibility.

If Q_I has to do with personal justification, the question is whether you can be blamed for believing what you know. If you know that your beliefs are true, you cannot rightly be blamed for a breach of epistemic duty. It would be unreasonable for me to say that you were irresponsible or unreasonable in believing *p* having conceded that you knew you were right. If Q_I is a question about doxastic justification, the question is whether your obligation can be to refrain from believing what you know is true. If Cooper concedes that Harry knows *p*, he cannot then say that Harry was in no position to rightly judge whether *p* was true. Knowledge suffices for doxastic justification if your justified beliefs are permissibly held beliefs. Since doxastic justification requires propositional justification, knowledge suffices for propositional justification.

It is controversial whether doxastic justification should be thought of as a deontological notion because it is controversial whether there are any epistemological obligations.¹⁸ We can show that knowledge requires doxastic justification without arguing from the assumption that justified beliefs are permissibly held beliefs.¹⁹ Suppose it is possible to know something without justifiably believing it and that it is possible to justifiably believe something without knowing it. Suppose Coop justifiably believes that *p* without knowing this is so and that he knows *p* entails *q* without justifiably believing that this is so. If Coop competently deduces *q*, what is the status of Coop's belief? Coop does not have knowledge of both premises, so it seems Coop does not know *q*. Since Coop does justifiably believe both premises, Coop does not justifiably believe *q*. Surely there is *something* epistemically good going for a belief that is competently deduced from a set of premises either known or justifiably believed. If not justification, what would it be? Since there seems to be no good answer to this

¹⁸ Alston 1989 rejects the deontological theory of justification.

¹⁹ Williamson 2007, p. 112.

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question, perhaps we should say that Coop justifiably believed each of the premises in his deduction after all.

Turning now to Q2, it is obvious that propositional justification does not suffice for knowledge. You can have sufficient propositional justification for propositions you have never entertained, but you cannot know p without having ever had p in mind. It is also clear that personal justification does not require knowledge. Gettier's cases show that you can be personally justified in believing true propositions without knowing that they are true:

Coins: Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job. And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

- d. Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.

Smith's evidence for (d) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (d) entails:

- e. The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

Let us suppose that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e), and accepts (e) on the grounds of (d), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (e) is true.

But imagine, further, that unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket. Proposition (e) is then true, though proposition (d), from which Smith inferred (e), is false ... [I]t is equally clear that Smith does not know that (e) is true; for (e) is true in virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in (e) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.²⁰

For reasons discussed below, I think Smith is justified in believing (e), but he does not justifiably believe (e).

Even if Coins is not a case of doxastic justification without knowledge, we have good reason to think that there is more to knowledge than doxastic justification:

Fake Barns: Henry is driving in the countryside with his son. For the boy's edification Henry identifies various objects on the landscape as they come into view. "That's a cow," says Henry, "That's a tractor," "That's a silo," "That's a barn," etc. Henry has no doubt about the identity of these objects; in particular, he has no

²⁰ Gettier 1963, p. 122.

doubt that the last-mentioned object is a barn, which indeed it is. Each of the identified objects has features characteristic of its type. Moreover, each object is fully in view, Henry has excellent eyesight, and he has enough time to look at them reasonably carefully, since there is little traffic to distract him ... Suppose we are told that, unknown to Henry, the district he has just entered is full of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns. These facsimiles look from the road exactly like barns, but are really just facades, without back walls or interiors ... having just entered the district, Henry has not encountered any facsimiles; the object he sees is a genuine barn. But if the object on that site were a facsimile, Henry would mistake it for a barn. Given this new information, we would be strongly inclined to withdraw the claim that Henry knows the object is a barn.²¹

Newspaper: A political leader is assassinated. His associates, fearing a coup, decide to pretend that the bullet hit someone else. On nationwide television they announce that an assassination attempt has failed to kill the leader but has killed a secret service man by mistake. However, before the announcement is made, an enterprising reporter on the scene telephones the real story to his newspaper, which has included the story in its final edition. Jill buys a copy of that paper and reads the story of the assassination. What she reads is true and so are her assumptions about how the story came to be in the paper. The reporter, whose byline appears, saw the assassination and dictated his report, which is now printed just as he dictated it. Jill has justified true belief and, it would seem, all her intermediate conclusions are true. But she does not know that the political leader has been assassinated. For everyone else has heard about the televised announcement. They may also have seen the story in the paper and, perhaps, do not know what to believe; and it is highly implausible that Jill should know simply because she lacks evidence everyone else has. Jill does not know. Her knowledge is undermined by evidence she does not possess.²²

I think Goldman and Harman are right that you can justifiably believe what you do not know if, say, you form your beliefs in an environment rife with evidence that easily could have led you astray.²³ While I shall argue that justification requires a kind of non-accidental connection to truth, I do not intend to defend any kind of JTB (the ‘justified in holding a true belief’) account of knowledge.²⁴ There is no sense in which justification requires knowledge and no sense in which knowledge does not require justification.

In what follows, my primary focus will be on the notion of doxastic justification. This is not because the notion of personal justification is uninteresting, but because doxastic justification is the notion most

²¹ Goldman 1976, p. 772. He credits the case to Carl Ginet.

²² Harman 1973, p. 144.

²³ For a dissenting view, see Sosa 2007.

²⁴ An increasing number of epistemologists now think that justification is knowledge. I believe Sutton 2007 was the first to defend this view. Also see Haddock 2010 and Rödl 2007.