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A defense of internalist foundations: direct awareness of fit as the solution to the Sellarsian dilemma

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University of Iowa

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A DEFENSE OF INTERNALIST FOUNDATIONS: DIRECT AWARENESS
OF FIT AS THE SOLUTION TO THE SELLARSIAN DILEMMA

by
Travis McLane Dickinson

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Doctor of
Philosophy degree in Philosophy
in the Graduate College of
The University of Iowa

July 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Richard A. Fumerton

ABSTRACT

Many of our ordinary beliefs about the world around us are a result of inference from more fundamental beliefs. Foundationalists in epistemology have thought that, if these ordinary beliefs are to be rationally justified, the chain of inferential justification must terminate in a belief that is justified *noninferentially*. Foundationalists, of the internalist variety, have thought that the most plausible candidates for ending the regress of empirical justification are experiential states, the justifying features of which the believing subject is aware.

The Sellarsian dilemma, taking its name from philosopher Wilfrid Sellars, has been a persistent argument against foundationalist theories of epistemic justification. There have been various formulations of the dilemma over the years, but in its most general form it says that for any construal of an experiential state where the experiential state provides justification, the experiential state (or the apprehension thereof) will need further justification. Sellars thought that an experience, all by itself, cannot provide justification unless we apply concepts to the experience. However, the application of concepts is judgmental and conceptual judgments, like beliefs, require further justification. So, the experiential state construed this way would perpetuate the regress it was designed to terminate. On the other hand, if the experiential state is construed such that it is not in need of

justification, then it cannot itself provide justification. Both options are devastating to a foundationalist epistemology.

My thesis is that a solution to all forms of the Sellarsian dilemma is to require for foundational justification direct awareness of (what I call) the fit between one's conceptual judgment and the justifying experiential state. I concede that one must conceptualize one's experiential states for these states to play an epistemic role. However, I argue that conceptual judgments of this sort *are the foundations*.

The importance of this solution is that it not only terminates the regress of justification but it also captures the primary intuitions that motivate internalism and foundationalism. This is to say that although I have framed my account as a response to the Sellarsian dilemma, it is not merely an *ad hoc* patch that avoids what stood as a serious problem. Instead, it is a return to what has motivated and what I take to be most persuasive about internalist foundationalism.

Abstract Approved: _____
Thesis Supervisor

Title and Department

Date

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Graduate College
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Travis McLane Dickinson

has been approved by the Examining Committee
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy
degree in Philosophy at the July 2011 graduation.

Thesis Committee:

Richard A. Fumerton, Thesis Supervisor

Ali Hasan

Evan Fales

David Cunning

Frederick Skiff

To my lovely ladies,
Kaelia, Delaney, and Emery
And especially, my love, Shari.

And to the Truth.

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I would also like to thank my faculty members, both past and present, for aiding me in the formation of my philosophical views (Notables by last name are Moreland, Geivett, DeWeese, Horner, Cunning, Hasan, Fales, Landini, and Stern). Thanks also to my family, both biological and in-law. You all have made this moment possible.

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INTRODUCTION

Suppose that, while sitting in my office, I come to believe that it is breezy outside. Suppose also that a curious interlocutor asks for a reason for this belief and I respond with beliefs about the swaying of tree branches as evidence for there being a breeze outside. Since I have offered more beliefs as evidential support, the interlocutor could then rightfully press for a reason for these beliefs. Why do beliefs about the swaying of tree branches stand as evidence for there being a breeze? If I offer further belief as a reason, then it will also need to be rationally justified. The worry is that unless there is an end to this process of questioning where no further justification is needed, then it looks as if this ordinary belief is not justified.

The intuition that is at the heart of foundationalism is that if ordinary beliefs, such as this one about its being breezy outside, are to be rationally justified, the chain of inferential justification must terminate in a belief that is justified *noninferentially*. There must be *something* that provides justification without itself needing further justification. Unless we can secure this foundational sort of justification, we are faced with the specter of skepticism vis-à-vis our ordinary beliefs.

Foundationalists, at least of the internalist variety, have thought that the most plausible candidates for ending the regress of *empirical justification*¹ are experiential states themselves, the relevant features of

¹ In this project, I will primarily be concerned with noninferential empirical justification.

which the believing subject is aware. An internalist foundationalist might offer the experience of pain as an example of a foundationally justifying experiential state. Being aware of one's pain, it is thought, can justify the belief that I am in pain without the experience itself needing to be justified.

As intuitive as this may sound, there is a fundamental problem. It is the problem raised by the *Sellarsian Dilemma*, taking its name from philosopher Wilfrid Sellars. In the following, I defend internalist foundations from this profound threat.

CHAPTER 1: WHAT IS THE SELLARSIAN DILEMMA?

As with every philosophical controversy, there is here a specific backdrop of philosophical views and related controversies that frame and shape the discussion. The Sellarsian dilemma, as presented by Sellars himself,² finds its home in a sustained attack on “the given.”³ I will provide some of this philosophical backdrop and then describe a few of the dilemmas that have been designed to devastate the foundationalist given, or noninferential justification, more broadly construed. I will then provide a generalized formulation of the Sellarsian dilemma that captures and makes explicit the problem that confronts the foundationalist.

1.1 Background: The Given

Philosophers have no doubt had various conceptions of the given in mind, but minimally the given is that element in experience that provides the foundation for empirical knowledge and justification. The given could perhaps best be seen in contrast to what we might call *the taken*. That is, the given is the conscious element of experience; the existence of which does not depend upon a judgmental attitude (a “taking”) of any sort. The given is just as the name suggests. It is that which is given in the experience directly to one’s consciousness.

² We will see that Sellars presents various formulations of the Sellarsian dilemma. In section 1.4, I will offer a generalized formulation of the dilemma and it will be to this dilemma that I refer to as *the* Sellarsian dilemma.

³ See “Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind” in Sellars (1963).

The given, broadly construed, has been an important part of the defense of many foundationalist epistemologies, although use of the term in contemporary analytic epistemology seems to have largely fallen out of favor. The foundationalist has traditionally thought that if there is to be a foundation of sense-based beliefs, there must be *something* in the experience whose existence, or at least the epistemological significance of which, does not depend upon a belief state. Otherwise, regress looms darkly. Put another way, there must be a given element that justifies (or plays a role in justifying) *noninferentially* these foundational beliefs. The intuition is that if there were no given element, then there would be no foundation of empirical justification since there would be all and only inference.

One historically prominent view for which the given element of experience played an important theoretical role is the classic sense-datum theory. In fact, the sense-datum theory was, at times, the primary target of Sellars' attack on the given.⁴ In his book *Perception*, H.H. Price, a sense-datum theorist, construes the sense datum as basically synonymous with that which is given in experience, that of which one is directly aware. Price famously considers a visual experience as of a tomato. Price thought that

⁴ It is more than a little awkward for one to be challenged to have to *defend* the given since it is supposed to be, well, given. One might think that, if it existed, the given should need no defense and since it clearly does give a further reason to doubt that there is a given. However, I am not sure that the state of being given should be thought of as ineffably given. That is, the givenist needs not be committed to the idea that the given is utterly unable to be characterized even though once the state includes a characterization then one's overall state is of course no longer a state that is solely given. Also, much of the literature that concerns the Sellarsian dilemma and its relation to the given is best thought of as calling into question not the existence of the given but that the given can play a justificatory role. See Fales (1996), pp. 1-6.

there is much that a subject can doubt with respect to his or her standing in a relation to an actual tomato, doubts familiar to any student of epistemology. However, as he says, what cannot be doubted is that “there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape, standing out from a background of other colour-patches, and having a certain visual depth, and that this whole field of colour is directly present to my consciousness.”⁵ Price takes himself to have here indicated that which is perceptually given.

One thing we should note is that though Price takes the sense datum to exist with some kind of certainty, he could not mean that the datum was itself certain since certainty is a property of beliefs.⁶ He might mean that our awareness of the datum gives rise to a belief that is certain. However another way to understand this appeal to “certainty,” vis-à-vis the given, is that, in experience, one has awareness of a fact or facts.⁷ A fact is a feature

⁵ Price (1950), p. 3.

⁶ It would be a mistake to think of the sense datum itself as having the property of certainty or even infallibility if the sense datum is to play a role in justifying noninferential belief as the given element of experience. The sense datum will need to be thought of as a nondoxastic state, the reality constitutive of experience that would make true the corresponding doxastic attitude. The point is that, properly speaking, doubt and certainty are properties of beliefs. When we doubt, we doubt that some one of our beliefs is true or likely to be true. So, it would have to be the *judgment* that there exists a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape that is infallible or certain in Price’s consideration of the experience as of a tomato. This is important because if the foundationalist does not distinguish the sense datum (or whatever one takes to be the nondoxastic element of experience) from a doxastic attitude, then the foundationalist will simply invite the Sellarsian to point out how much it sounds as if we are here referring to something judgmental when we refer to what is supposed to be directly given in experience. Of course, if the belief that there is a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape is certain, in the sense of being infallible, then it follows that there does exist a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape. So, we can get Price’s conclusion but it will pay off to be precise in this regard.

of the world that is, at least, conceptually independent of anyone's representation of that fact.⁸ A fact is secure in a way that a belief is not. A belief can be false, whereas a fact is just a fact, if it is a fact at all. In other words, a fact doesn't have a truth value but is the sort of thing that can stand in a truthmaking relation to a representation of that fact. So when the object of awareness is a fact, then one has a confrontation with a feature of the world.⁹ When one has "found" in experience this direct confrontation with reality, then the foundationalist hope is that it would ultimately ground and support the rest of what we justifiably believe.

1.2 The Dilemma

So it is crucial for any viable version of foundationalism to posit some sort of nondoxastic state¹⁰ that justifies noninferentially some set of doxastic states for the purpose of, among other things, terminating the regress of justification from higher level doxastic attitudes. As we saw above, Price

⁷ Price, himself explicitly rejects construing the sense datum as a fact but he seems to have something like a proposition in mind rather than a state of affairs or chunk of reality. See note 17 in the present chapter.

⁸ It is difficult to say in what way a fact must be mind-independent given that there are facts that consist of the mind exemplifying properties. See a discussion in Fumerton (2002), pp. 6-9. Fumerton argues that the fact that someone has beliefs does not entail that someone believes that someone has beliefs. Thus even the fact of someone having beliefs is conceptually independent of someone believing that someone has beliefs.

⁹ "World" here should be understood broadly to include facts of experience.

¹⁰ By referring to these as *states*, I mean to include the awareness one has of the experiences or beliefs. This will be important since some forms of the Sellarsian dilemma do not make trouble for the disparity between an experience and a belief but rather the awareness thereof. By "nondoxastic," I minimally intend a state that is not judgmental in a way that would require further justification.

posited the apprehending of a sense datum as the requisite nondoxastic state that provides noninferential justification. Thus, being nondoxastic, the question of justification of the nondoxastic state is not meant to arise. One needs justification for believing that a fact obtains. One does not, by contrast, need a reason for the mere existence of a fact.

It is precisely here that Sellars' argument takes aim, since if the awareness of the datum is itself nondoxastic, the foundationalist is going to have to give an account of how it is supposed to justify the relevant doxastic state. What you do not get in Price's account is *why* the mere existence of the perceptually given, a state that is wholly distinct from a doxastic state, justifies anything at all, even the beliefs that are about the given.

The foundationalist must proceed very carefully here since the characterization of the alleged justifying state cannot come out looking too much like a doxastic state or else it may admit of the need of justification itself and then the regress of justification lives on. However, the alleged justifying state can't come out being utterly unlike a doxastic state if it is to do justificatory work. The Sellarsian dilemma asserts that there is no logical space between these two extremes. In short, any construal of the nondoxastic state playing the necessary justificatory role will render the state itself in need of further justification. And any construal of the nondoxastic state that ends the regress of justification will fail to provide justification.

1.3 Formulations of the Sellarsian Dilemma

We will now consider three distinct renderings of the Sellarsian dilemma beginning with Sellars himself. Though the dilemmas we will now consider are distinct in their aims and in some of their finer details, each one raises a fundamental problem for the sort of foundationalism I will here be defending.

1.3.1 Wilfrid Sellars

In his *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars intends to demonstrate what he calls the “myth of the given” and gives many arguments towards this end. Michael Williams has said, “one of the stranger features of Sellars’s discussion of the myth is that, although he introduces many forms that the myth has taken, he never pauses to characterize the myth in general terms.”¹¹ In light of this neglect, Robert Brandom, a leading Sellars scholar, has characterized the myth as something like a naturalistic fallacy found in ethics, where one thinks that “some kinds of nonepistemic facts about knowers could entail epistemic facts about them.”¹² Sellars says something to this effect:

[The] idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder—even ‘in principle’—into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of

¹¹ Williams (2003), pp. 97-98.

¹² Brandom (1997). p. 121.

subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake—a mistake of a piece with the so-called ‘naturalistic fallacy’.¹³

Perhaps Brandom is right here, though not much turns on this contention for our purposes. It is clear enough that Sellars thought that the foundationalist is identifying more or less obvious facts and pressing them into epistemological service in a way that Sellars found illicit and this has some affinity with the naturalistic fallacy. In any case, I will be arguing that there are at least two lines of argument that purport to devastate foundationalist views.

Sellars begins his attack on the given by taking the sense-datum theorist to task. He asserts that the sense-datum theorist is trying to have his cake and eat it too by affirming both that it is particulars which are sensed and that this sensing is knowledge or what Sellars calls a *knowing*.¹⁴

Sellars argues that if the given or, more precisely, the sensing of a sense datum,¹⁵ is to serve as a foundation for our empirical knowledge, then that which is sensed cannot be particulars. He says:

¹³ Sellars (1963), p. 131.

¹⁴One thing to note is that Sellars is focused on knowledge whereas I have so far framed the discussion as one concerning justification. One reason that Sellars focuses on knowledge is that this is consonant with the literature of the sense-datum theorists and epistemologists in this period. Although I will go on to insist that we focus our attention on justification rather than knowledge, nothing too much turns on whether we characterize Sellars’ argument with ‘knowledge’ or ‘justification.’ For the most part, the problems that are produced will apply equally, *mutatis mutandis*, no matter if one is defending a theory of knowledge or a theory of justification.

¹⁵ It is important to note that the terminology of this debate has not always been precise. Sellars (and some of the sense datum theorists) talk about sensing in reference to the relation that a subject stands in to the sense datum. So, this is to awkwardly say of a

Now if we bear in mind that the point of the epistemological category of the given is, presumably, to explicate the idea that empirical knowledge rests on a ‘foundation’ of non-inferential knowledge of matter of fact, we may well experience a feeling of surprise on noting that according to sense-datum theorists, it is *particulars* that are sensed. For what is *known*, even in non-inferential knowledge, is *facts* rather than particulars, items of the form *something’s being thus-and-so* or *something’s standing in a certain relation to something else*.¹⁶

The idea seems to be that if particulars are to serve an epistemic role, then it couldn’t just merely be the sensing of a particular, where this is to be understood in contrast to the sensing of a particular being a certain way, what Sellars will refer to as the “sensing of a fact.”

It is difficult to know what it is to merely sense a particular, as opposed to sensing the particular’s being a certain way. Though Sellars does not mention Price by name, he seems to have something like the Pricean view in mind. Price was explicit that he thought of the sense datum as what he called a “particular existent,” where the particular is different from facts¹⁷ about the particular or even properties of the particular. He says:

subject that he or she is sensing a sense datum as if one is, for example, as a kind of homunculus, *seeing* one’s visual sense datum. If one must sense one’s sense datum in a literal sense this would just plainly invite regress worries that the foundationalist hopes to avoid. Since this is pervasive in the literature, I will use the same awkward phrasing but I won’t be addressing it as a problem since it seems to be merely a terminological issue that is easily avoided if one characterizes this relation as a relation of awareness or acquaintance rather than a sensing. If it is not terminological issue and there are more serious problems here, then these are problems primarily for the sense-datum theorist and I have no truck with the sense-datum theory.

¹⁶ Sellars (1963), p. 129.

¹⁷ It is possible that Price meant by “facts” something better termed as propositions since he doesn’t seem to think of a fact as a feature of reality, something being thus and so, as Sellars will go on to say. Rather, Price seems to think of these as being descriptive since

That the noise is loud is a fact about a sense datum, or an attribute of a sense-datum; but no one would say that it *is* a sense-datum. It is not what I hear, or auditorily sense. What I hear is the noise. Facts are not heard, but recognized or 'judged'...The noise is clearly a *particular existent*...something which has attributes, something about which there are facts, but not itself a fact or attribute.¹⁸

So with these somewhat cryptic remarks, Price fully embraces the thesis that what is sensed are particulars, whatever this precisely amounts to.

Sellars' thought is that the mere existence of the sense datum before one's consciousness for some subject S cannot entail that S has knowledge with respect to the datum. However one wants to construe particulars, it seems clear that particulars are not the sort of thing that can be themselves either true or false. The particular itself (in contrast, perhaps, to beliefs about the particular), then, cannot stand in any logical relations. Thus, if it is a particular that is being sensed, then neither what is given nor the sensing itself can serve as a premise to justify beliefs.

So, if the sensing of a sense datum is to be a knowing, Sellars thinks, it must be the sensing of facts rather than the sensing of particulars. However, knowing something's being thus-and-so, say, that one has a red patch in one's visual field, Sellars says, "*is* acquired and does presuppose a (complicated) process of concept formation."¹⁹ The idea seems to be that in order to be

he uses the locution "facts about" a sense datum, identifies a fact using a that clause, and says that facts are not sensed but are instead recognized or judged.

¹⁸ Price (1950), p. 103.

¹⁹ Sellars (1963), p. 131.

aware of the fact of there being a red patch in one's visual field requires one to possess the concept of red. A newborn baby, who has never seen the color red and lacks the cognitive ability to categorize the experience of redness, could not, in this understanding of 'sensing,' sense the content *as red*. One couldn't sense something being thus-and-so if one did not possess the concept of thus-and-so-ness. He says:

...most empirically minded philosophers are strongly inclined to think that all classificatory consciousness, all knowledge *that something is thus-and-so*, or, in logicians' jargon, all subsumption of particulars under universals, involves learning, concept formation, even the use of symbols.²⁰

So, a knowing of this sort may be knowledge but it could not be noninferential knowledge since, according to Sellars, it presupposes a conceptual history that will consist of prior judgments in the classification of experience.

Given the above, Sellars thought that this produced what he called an "inconsistent triad" of propositions all of which he thinks the sense datum theorist is committed to when characterizing the epistemology of sensing, say, a red sense datum:

- A. *X senses red sense content s entails x noninferentially knows that s is red.*
- B. The ability to sense sense contents is unacquired.
- C. The ability to know facts of the form x is ϕ is acquired.²¹

²⁰ Sellars (1963), p. 131.

²¹ Sellars (1963), p. 132.

Sellars thought that the affirmation of any two of these theses would entail the negation of the third. This creates a logical problem in the consistency of the triad of propositions. The unacquired ability to sense sense contents cannot all by itself entail the ability to know facts since knowing facts requires concept formation. The idea is that the sensing of a sense datum is supposed to be noninferential knowledge merely in virtue of its occurrence.²² But this is what Sellars thinks is mythological since the simple awareness of a sense datum does not entail having any knowledge of the sense datum's being thus and so. If the sensing of a sense datum is knowledge of the sense datum's being thus and so, then sensing of a sense datum requires something else, namely concept formation, and is thus not noninferential knowledge merely in virtue of its occurrence.

So, putting this together in a statement of Sellars' first dilemma, we have:

Either...

1. Sensing a sense datum is the sensing of a particular in which case it is not a knowing.

Or...

2. Sensing a sense datum is a knowing in which case it is facts which are sensed and the knowing isn't noninferential.

Either way, sensing a sense datum is not noninferential knowledge.

In many ways, this argument has been dialectically powerful since sense-datum theorists have, at least, talked as if they would be willing to concede each thesis of the triad. As was mentioned, Price explicitly

²² Koons (2006) makes a similar point. See p. 149.

characterizes the sense datum as a particular existent and, at times, talks as if the mere existence of the datum being sensed entails noninferential knowledge. Insofar as it is true that Price, or other sense datum theorists, would concede each of these theses, then their accounts would be in trouble. However, if this is to be a plausible argument, in its own right, with general application, then there are a few items about which we need to get clear.

Let's look more closely at the inconsistent triad. Proposition C asserts that knowing a fact is an acquired ability. As has been said above, the sensing of facts is acquired in that it requires a process of concept formation. Sellars seemed to think that it was obvious that, given the need for this prior conceptual history, sensing a fact could not be noninferential knowledge. However, the important question to ask here is why an ability's being acquired entails that the knowledge gained from the ability is inferential. It would be a mistake, I think, to simply equate 'acquired' with 'inferential' and 'unacquired' with 'noninferential.'

Moreover, it seems to me that even if knowledge of facts requires a process of concept formation, it doesn't follow that the use of the concept renders the conceptual judgment inferential. That is, one could have a theory of concept formation such that the subject must encounter various tokens of a type of experience and then generalize that the tokens constitute instances of a certain type. So, for instance, a child might have to encounter numerous instances of triangles before the child can generalize from these instances

common features which form the concept of triangularity. Once the concept is so formed, however, the child's conceptual judgments may not rely on the formation process it took to possess the concept as she classifies things in her experience. In fact, we seem to forget about the process of concept formation and can just pick out instances that fall under a concept. It is not as if we must recall past token experiences of triangularity (or being appeared triangularly) in order to judge a shape in our visual field to be in the extension of that concept.

This point can perhaps be made more crisply with reference to justification rather than knowledge. If we are in search of a noninferentially justified belief as part of the foundations of the justificatory structure then we cannot posit anything in the analysis of the justification of a belief B that is itself doxastic or judgmental (other than perhaps B). If we did, then these further judgments would need to be justified and the regress of justification is propounded. The above claim is that it would be okay if we engaged in a process of concept formation so long as the justification of a conceptual judgment did not depend upon this process. It seems that God could supernaturally instill the concept or we may form the concept causally due to a head injury. Once we possess the concept, however, so long as we are able to justifiably apply the concept, then this causal history may be irrelevant to the justification of the conceptual judgment.

Additionally, the thought that the mere sensing of a fact requires a conceptual history is also dubious. Roderick Chisholm identified various uses of “appear words” (e.g., “appear,” “seem,” “look,” etc.).²³ One use of appear words is comparative. So if one were to say “the shirt looks red,” Chisholm thought that what one may mean is “the shirt looks the way that red things typically look under certain conditions of lighting.” This use invokes background knowledge which would thereby invoke prior concepts. If being conscious of an appearance requires a comparison such as this, then Sellars would be right that the awareness of the character of experience would not be fit for a state of noninferential justification.

However, there is another use of appear words that Chisholm refers to as the “noncomparative use”. The noncomparative use of appear words is when we refer to the qualitative character of the experience itself. This use, Chisholm thought, seems to be presupposed by the comparative use. So when one says that “the shirt looks red” it is not clear how one could mean this in a comparative sense without also referring to the qualitative character of which one is aware. Even if one finds out that there is a strange light that produces the appearance of red, one may cease to believe that the shirt looks the way red *things* look since it turns out that this is not a red thing. However, in the noncomparative sense, there is still an appearance of red.

²³ The first way that appear words are used is what Chisholm called the *epistemic use*. Here when one says that the ship “appears to be moving” it is a way to express a belief or an inclination to believe where one might want to soften one’s commitment to the belief. See Chisholm (1957), pp. 43-53 for a full discussion.

Thus, contrary to what Sellars claims, the sensing of a fact need not even require concept formation so long as we emphasize the noncomparative sense.

To sum up, it is clearly problematic to affirm the triad of propositions given their logical inconsistency. However, the logical problem seems to me to be in affirming that the sensing of a sense content entails knowledge (thesis A). Given this commitment, the consequent of the conditional requires concepts where the antecedent is devoid of the need for concepts. If one thinks that mere sensation entails factual knowledge, then this strikes me as mythic indeed. However, I see no reason why the sense datum theorist (and foundationalist in general) need affirm the entailment between the sensing of a sense datum and the knowledge thereof. The sensing of a sense datum, thought of noncomparatively, need not require a judgment, and if a judgment is necessary for knowledge then this by itself would preclude the entailment. So, I think that the foundationalist has room to maneuver with respect to Sellars' first formulation of his dilemma.

A second and more powerful statement of the problem that Sellars has in mind comes later in the essay. This portion is more directly aimed at foundationalists in general. Sellars says:

To be the expression of knowledge, a report must not only *have* authority, this authority must *in some sense* be recognized by the person whose report it is. And this is a steep hurdle indeed.²⁴

²⁴ Sellars (1963), p. 168.

What is the authority that is in view here? For the foundationalist, the authority is ultimately derived from there being a foundation of noninferential knowledge. Sellars says:

...the noninferential knowledge of facts belonging to this structure constitutes the ultimate court of appeals for all factual claims- particular and general- about the world.²⁵

This is a familiar point made by many foundationalists. Russell when he characterizes knowledge by description thinks it always involves knowledge by acquaintance as its “source and ground.”²⁶ Knowledge by acquaintance is noninferential, for Russell. So the epistemic status of descriptive knowledge is parasitic on the epistemic status of the acquaintance knowledge. Roderick Chisholm, making use of a theological metaphor, characterized the noninferential foundation as the prime or unmoved mover in the epistemic sense.²⁷ Just as God is the ultimate cause of all being for the theist, noninferential justification is ultimately what provides justification for the rest of what we justifiably believe. This authoritative status of the foundations is, in effect, an upshot of the classic regress argument for foundationalism alluded to in the introduction. An inferential belief is justified (or has epistemic authority) only insofar as it is inferred from something that is itself justified. However, this regress of justification must

²⁵ Sellars (1963), p. 164.

²⁶ Russell (1959), p. 46.

²⁷ Chisholm (1977), p. 25.

ultimately be due to a state that justifies without itself needing to be justified. So, it is in this way that noninferentially justified belief is authoritative in Sellars' sense.

The foundationalist with this sort of schema is faced with a problem.

Sellars goes on to say:

For if the authority of the report 'This is green' lies in the fact that the existence of green items appropriately related to the perceiver can be inferred from the occurrence of such reports, it follows that only a person who is able to draw this inference...could be in a position to token 'This is green' in recognition of its authority.²⁸

The problem is that in order for the noninferential knowledge, what Sellars calls the "observational report," to make an epistemic difference to the subject (to be that which confers epistemic authority) will require the recognition that the observational report has this authority. The fact that the observational report has this authority, Sellars seems to think, is irrelevant, epistemically speaking, if the subject is not aware of this fact. But recognition of the authority injects into the analysis something doxastic that will require further justification and the regress of justification lives on.

In a famous passage, Sellars says:

The essential point is that in characterizing an episode or a state as that of a knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says.²⁹

²⁸ Sellars (1963), p. 168.

²⁹ Sellars (1963), p. 169.

Sellars implies that what the foundationalist is guilty of is providing an empirical description of a state and identifying certain features that are then called “foundational knowledge.” However, the “essential point” is that unless the subject knows or recognizes that these features are true of this state, then the state all by itself does not get a place in the logical space of reasons.

Another interesting feature of this formulation is that this would make trouble for both the internalist and the externalist foundationalist. It is not difficult to see how one could construe an externalist theory of justification, such as process reliabilism, as a species of foundationalism where the foundational beliefs are the results of what Alvin Goldman called an “unconditionally reliable belief-independent process.”³⁰ Being belief-independent, these belief forming processes produce beliefs noninferentially. However, if we see reliability as supposedly having the kind of authority that renders a belief justified in this foundational sense, Sellars is making the claim that it is not enough for a belief to merely have reliability but there must also be knowledge of, or at least recognition of, the reliability. Ernest Sosa has pointed out that this relevance to externalist theories such as

³⁰ Goldman (1979), p. 347. In fact, in his defense of process reliabilism, Goldman says that he has no objection to viewing his theory “as a kind of ‘Foundationalism’ because of its recursive structure.” His one caveat is that one “keeps in mind how different this ‘diachronic’ form of Foundationalism is from Cartesian, or other ‘synchronic’ varieties of Foundationalism.” See Goldman (1979), p. 348.

reliabilism is a “neat trick” since Sellars account comes before such externalist accounts were formulated, at least, in print.³¹

So, here is the argument in the form of a dilemma:

1. One either recognizes or does not recognize the epistemic authority of one’s noninferential belief.
2. If one recognizes the epistemic authority, then this recognition is constituted, in part, by judgments that will require further justification which perpetuates the regress of justification.
3. If one does not recognize the epistemic authority, then the belief is not justified.

It’s worth noting that this sets the stage for Sellars’ positive epistemological view. For there to be observation knowledge, Sellars requires that there be this recognition of the authority of the observational belief. The logical consequence of this requirement is, as has been stated, that other judgments need to be made that will require justification. This is devastating to the foundationalist for the reason specified above, but Sellars can embrace this consequence by embracing a coherence theory of justification. He thinks that the justification of the observational knowledge and the knowledge of epistemic authority are in some way interdependent and thus his dilemma for foundationalists can motivate his own coherentist view.

1.3.2 BonJour

Laurence BonJour’s early work when he defended a coherence theory of justification was greatly influenced by Sellars’ philosophical views.³² In

³¹ Sosa (1997b), p. 279.

the *Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (SEK), BonJour's approach is to offer a "detailed analysis and critique of the main varieties of empirical foundationalism," and purports to show conclusively "that no account of the supposed foundational beliefs is finally tenable, and thus that foundationalism, despite its historical hegemony, is fundamentally a dead end."³³ Given what BonJour takes to be the demise of foundationalism, the regress argument can motivate the consideration of coherentism. He thought that, with foundationalism out of the way, since skepticism is *prima facie* implausible and infinitism is unsupportable, a second look at coherence is warranted. We will here be primarily interested in his anti-foundationalist arguments especially since he has since given up his coherence theory of justification.³⁴

BonJour thought that externalism was untenable on independent grounds and so the real target of his anti-foundationalist arguments is the internalist foundationalist (hereafter, I will mean by "foundationalism" internalist foundationalism unless otherwise specified). BonJour argued that, for any view of foundationalism, there will be some property ϕ which is proposed as that which makes the empirical belief foundationally basic. However, given internalist commitments, the belief cannot be justified for a

³² In the introduction to BonJour (1985), he states "though it has never been my good fortune to have Sellars as a teacher in the ordinary sense, I have nonetheless learned more from him than from anyone else." See BonJour (1985), p. xiii.

³³ BonJour (1985), pp. xi-xii.

³⁴ BonJour describes his "conversion" in BonJour (2001) and BonJour (2003).

believer by merely possessing a belief exemplifying this property since, for any epistemic property, the property may be exemplified without the subject knowing or even being aware of the property's being exemplified. Bonjour thought that, for the internalist, the believer must also possess reasons for thinking both that a particular belief has ϕ and beliefs with ϕ are highly likely to be true. The reason is that Bonjour took truth to be the goal of our "distinctively cognitive endeavors."³⁵ Thus, he thought that epistemic justification simply amounts to possessing reasons that made likely the truth of the relevant belief. He says:

It follows that one's cognitive endeavors are epistemically justified only if and to the extent that they are aimed at this goal, which means very roughly that one accepts all and only those beliefs which one has good reason to think are true.³⁶

So, if the foundationalist substitutes the ϕ with, say, incorrigibility as the basic-making property, then the thought is that for the subject to merely have an incorrigible belief, this is not enough to provide justification *for the believing subject* to fulfill this cognitive goal. The believing subject would have to have a reason to think that the belief was incorrigible. Moreover, the believing subject must have reason to think that incorrigible beliefs make an epistemic connection to truth if the subject is to be in a positive epistemic position with respect to this basic belief. This is captured generally in the following argument:

³⁵ Bonjour (1985), p. 7.

³⁶ Bonjour (1985), p. 8.

1. Belief B has feature ϕ .
 2. Beliefs having feature ϕ are highly likely to be true.
- \therefore 3. B is highly likely to be true.³⁷

BonJour states that in order for a belief like B to be justified for a subject, the subject must be in “cognitive possession” of reasons for believing the above premises.³⁸ However, the foundationalist is going to be, at this point, in big trouble since this will mean that before B could be considered justified, one would need to justifiedly believe the above premises. The result is that B is not foundationally basic after all.

It should be noted that even though BonJour was, at this point, a coherentist with respect to empirical knowledge, he was a foundationalist with respect to *a priori* knowledge. He was, therefore, willing to concede that if the premises could be justified *a priori* then this would constitute a legitimate response to his argument. He was sure, however, that it could not be the case that both premises were justified *a priori* since, as he says, “B is after all, *ex hypothesi*, an empirical belief.”³⁹

BonJour gives a fuller statement of his argument that makes explicit the need for the believing subject to have cognitive possession of a reason to believe that beliefs with feature ϕ are highly likely to be true. He says:

1. Suppose that there are *basic empirical beliefs*, that is, empirical beliefs (a) which are epistemically justified, and (b) whose

³⁷ BonJour (1985), p. 31

³⁸ BonJour (1985), p. 31.

³⁹ BonJour (1985), p. 31

justification does not depend on that of any further empirical beliefs.

2. For a belief to be epistemically justified requires that there be a reason why it is likely to be true.
3. For a belief to be epistemically justified for a particular person requires that this person be himself in cognitive possession of such a reason.
4. The only way to be in cognitive possession of such a reason is to believe *with justification* the premises from which it follows that the belief is likely to be true.
5. The premises of such a justifying argument for an empirical belief cannot be entirely *a priori*; at least one such premise must be empirical.

Therefore, the justification of a supposed basic empirical belief must depend on the justification of at least one other empirical belief, contradicting 1; it follows that there can be no basic empirical beliefs.⁴⁰

Now clearly the foundationalist has a vested interest in rejecting the conclusion. But, of course, this will require the rejection of one or more of the premises. Let's ask what the foundationalist could plausibly reject. Premise 1 is out since it is precisely what the foundationalist intends for us to suppose. Premise 2 is highly plausible in that the most natural way to understand the concept of epistemic justification is as something that, in some sense, connects a belief to the truth.⁴¹ To reject premise 5 one would have to construe the premises that give one reason to believe a particular belief is highly likely to be true as justified *a priori* and this will seem to many difficult at best and most likely impossible.⁴² Thus, BonJour thinks

⁴⁰ BonJour (1985), p. 32.

⁴¹ We will have more to say about this in chapter 4.

⁴² BonJour does consider the rejection of premise 5 and highlights the problems attendant to blocking the argument this way. See BonJour (1985), pp. 79-84.

that the likely premises the foundationalist will be inclined to reject are either 3 or 4. To reject 3, BonJour thinks, is to go the way of the externalist.⁴³ So, according to BonJour, premise 4 is the only plausible way out for the internalist.

One thing to note is that the foundationalist should be uncomfortable with BonJour requiring that one be in “cognitive possession” of a reason for B in premises 3 and 4. And BonJour will sometimes even make reference to the given element of experience as a *cognitive state*. To go along with this is in some ways to play into BonJour’s Sellarsian sympathies since a cognitive state brings to mind something judgmental. However, for some philosophers “cognitive” just means relating to one’s mental life, or when something figures into or is relevant to consciousness. If BonJour does not have the more neutral notion of “cognitive,” then the argument begs the question against the foundationalist. Since I do not think that BonJour intends to be question-begging, we will assume the more neutral notion and not make too much of the terminology (at least for the moment).

So, how does the internalist foundationalist reject premise 4? The foundationalist could say that the believing subject is in cognitive possession of a reason that the basic belief is likely to be true in a way other than possessing a further belief. Instead of a further belief, the foundationalist might say that the given element of experience provides the subject with a

⁴³ BonJour devotes chapter three of the SEK to arguing against the externalist alternative.

reason for the basic belief being highly likely to be true. For example, the givenist might say that it is the subjective awareness of my pain that provides a reason for believing that I am in pain and the awareness of my pain does not require further justification. So when I am in pain, I do possess a reason for believing that I am in pain in the foundational way.

In chapter four of *SEK*, BonJour presents a few formulations of this strategy that he insists suffer from the same fundamental mistake. One of these was C.I. Lewis' conception of the given. Lewis identified the given as the sensuous qualities of experience. BonJour considers the sensuous quality of experiencing redness. We are asked to suppose that there is the basic belief, for Lewis, linguistically formulable only in expressive language (e.g., "seems like" or "appears as though"), that the sensuous character of red is present. The belief is made true by the experience and we might be led to think that the belief has something epistemically positive going for it.

However, BonJour says:

It seems clear on reflection that these two elements are not enough. It is not enough for the appropriate experiential content merely to exist; rather it must be *grasped* or *apprehended* by the person if he is to have a reason for accepting the basic belief.⁴⁴

The idea seems to be that without grasping the content of the experience, merely having the experience does nothing to justify the belief in question.

Even if the truthmaker itself is there before one's consciousness without apprehending or grasping the content of the experience, the experience

⁴⁴ BonJour (1985), p. 74.

cannot stand as an epistemic reason for the belief *for that subject*. This is because the mere occurrence of the sensuous content given in experience doesn't *constitute* justification for the relevant belief any more than the mere occurrence of Smith's fingerprints on a murder weapon constitutes a reason to believe that Smith is guilty of a murder. Minimally one would need to be aware of these fingerprints *as Smith's fingerprints* to be justified in this belief. Thus, there must be a third element here, which Bonjour identifies as the apprehension or grasping of the given content. He thinks that the believing subject must represent in thought the content of the sensation in order to have reason for thinking that the belief is made true by it. This is of course reminiscent of Sellars' claim that we must have a recognition of the authority of an observation report.

But what is it to apprehend the experiential content? If the apprehension is itself a cognitive state or is like a cognitive state where a judgment is made, then it looks as if the given element of experience cannot all by itself justify the experience without this further judgment. However, if a further judgment is made, then, just as before, the supposed basic belief is not basic after all. Bonjour is explicit about the dilemma in which he thinks the foundationalist is caught. He says:

The proponent of the given is caught in a fundamental and inescapable dilemma: if his intuitions or direct awarenesses or immediate apprehensions are construed as cognitive, at least quasi-judgmental (as seems clearly the more natural interpretation), then they will be both capable of providing justification for other cognitive states and in need of it themselves; but if they are construed as noncognitive,

nonjudgmental, then while they will not themselves need justification, they will also be incapable of giving it. In either case, such states will be incapable of serving as an adequate foundation for knowledge.⁴⁵

BonJour considers two ways a givenist could respond. The first is to resist the move to there being a third required element, the apprehension, in order for the given to justify the belief. One could insist that merely in virtue of there being a given content, that content is apprehended. There is no distinction between the given content and the apprehension thereof; to be given is to be apprehended. BonJour's response is to ask the very same question as before. Is the apprehension (now thought of as a non-distinct element of the having of the given content) judgmental or nonjudgmental? The very same worries remain with either of these options. If it is judgmental, then the given itself will need to be justified further. If the given itself is nonjudgmental, then it is unclear as to why it provides a reason for the belief.

The other response one could give is to say that the apprehension is, in a way, a quasi-cognitive (or semi-judgmental) state. It is like a belief in the sense that it can confer justification, but it is unlike a belief since it does so in the basic way, without itself needing to be justified. BonJour's response is that this is hopelessly *ad hoc* and could be used to solve any regress worry but only at the cost failing to have anything satisfying that motivates the solution.

⁴⁵ BonJour, (1985), p. 69. This formulation actually comes in response to Quinton's view but BonJour says Lewis' view has an exactly parallel problem to Quinton's.

Thus, no matter how primitive or rudimentary the given is supposed to be, if it is to be epistemically relevant to the belief, BonJour thinks that the given content must be apprehended in such a way that judgment enters the story. As a final remark BonJour says:

The basic idea of givenness after all is to distinguish two aspects of ordinary cognitive states, their capacity to justify other cognitive states and their own need for justification, and then to try to find a kind of state which possesses only the former aspect and not the latter – a state of immediate apprehension or intuition. But we can now see plainly that any such attempt is fundamentally misguided and intrinsically hopeless.⁴⁶

1.3.3 Bergmann

More recently Michael Bergmann has offered his own formulation of the Sellarsian dilemma. Distinguishing it from Sellars and BonJour, Bergmann says that he intends his dilemma to be a problem for *all* internalists.⁴⁷ Bergmann thinks that what makes an epistemological theory internalist is that it has an awareness requirement as a condition for justification. The idea is that it is not enough for a subject to have a belief

⁴⁶ BonJour (1985), p. 78.

⁴⁷ Bergmann says his dilemma is directed at *all* internalists but then he only applies it to internalists of the foundationalist variety. The coherentist might think she has some moves available to her to block the dilemma that the foundationalist does not. For instance, coherentists (such as the early BonJour) have claimed that worries about regress can be solved by insisting that justification should not be thought of as linear in structure but rather should be thought of as holistic. However, one should note that the regress that Bergmann argues for is a regress of infinite complexity and if the coherentist has an awareness requirement on the justifier (that a particular belief coheres with the overall set of beliefs) then the dilemma applies to this awareness in the same way it would for an internalist foundationalist. Perhaps the lack of address to any coherentist views is due to Bergmann thinking that coherentism of any variety is not a plausible reply to the dilemma for independent reasons, not unlike the early BonJour who thought (and still thinks) that externalism is an implausible response to his dilemma.

that has something going for it, in an epistemic sense. One must be, in some sense, aware of this epistemic virtue if the belief is to be justified *for the subject*. If the believing subject is not aware of this virtue, then, from one's subjective perspective, the belief's being epistemically virtuous will be merely accidental and will provide no rational justification, so says the internalist.

Bergmann explains his understanding of this awareness requirement as follows:

S's belief B is justified only if (i) there is something, X, that contributes to the justification of B—e.g. evidence for B or a truth-indicator for B or the satisfaction of some necessary condition of B's justification—and (ii) S is aware (or potentially aware) of X.⁴⁸

Bergmann makes clear that S need not be aware (or potentially aware) of *all* that is justificatorily relevant to the belief (as in all justification-contributors) as this would be an impossibly strong requirement.⁴⁹ Instead one only needs to be aware of *some* justification-contributor to be in a positive epistemic situation.

⁴⁸ Bergmann (2006), p. 9.

⁴⁹ Bergmann says "To require awareness of all justification-contributors is to require (for your belief's justification) awareness of the fact that your belief has satisfied each of the conditions necessary for its justification. But that means that for every necessary condition C of justification there is another necessary condition C* requiring awareness of the fact that C is satisfied. But that means there will be another necessary condition, C**, requiring awareness of the fact that C* is satisfied, and so on. Thus, to require awareness of *all* justification-contributors will lead automatically to a vicious regress of increasingly complex necessary conditions for justification. Bergmann cites Fumerton (1995), p. 81 for further reference." See Bergmann (2006), p. 9-10, n.13.

Although not every epistemologist characterizes internalism this way, it is not without some considerable precedent. Robert Audi, in distinguishing the internal, says:

The internal, in the relevant sense, is what we might call the (internally) *accessible*...The accessible includes what is actually in consciousness—such as thoughts and visual and other sensory impressions...To have (internal) access to something is either to have it in consciousness or to be able...to become aware of it.⁵⁰

Chisholm defended a view according to which epistemic “justification...is *internal*...in that one can find out directly, by *reflection*, what one is justified in believing at any time.”⁵¹ Finally, BonJour characterizes internalism as the “idea that the justifying reason for a basic belief, or indeed for any belief, must somehow be cognitively available to the believer himself, within his cognitive grasp or ken.”⁵² On this characterization of internalism, the primary motivation is the intuition that when one has a justified belief one should minimally be aware of something that contributes to the justification of this belief.

In fact, these motivating considerations seem so plainly intuitive that they are easily turned into an objection to any view that calls a belief justified, where one may have no idea from his or her subjective perspective what his or her belief has going for it. When externalist theories of

⁵⁰ Audi (1998), p. 238.

⁵¹ Chisholm (1989), p. 7.

⁵² BonJour (2003), p. 24.

justification posit external factors that are by definition ones of which the subject is unaware, given the above intuition, the internalist is poised to object that if the person has no idea that these external factors obtain, the belief will be from his or her perspective no more reasonable than a stray hunch.

Laurence Bonjour's famous case of Norman the Clairvoyant is a paradigmatic objection of this sort. The thought experiment was intended to show that purely external features are irrelevant to the subjective rationality of holding a belief. After employing various thought experiments involving clairvoyants, Bonjour gave the following as a decisive problem for the externalist:

Norman, under certain conditions which usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence either for or against this belief. In fact, the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power under circumstances in which it is completely reliable.⁵³

Bonjour goes on to make the point that we, from our privileged perspective, know that the belief has something going for it in the sense that it will non-accidentally turn out true (or at least is likely to be true). Bonjour says "But how is this supposed to justify Norman's belief? From his subjective perspective, it *is* an accident that the belief is true."⁵⁴

⁵³ Bonjour (1985), p. 41.

⁵⁴ Bonjour (1985), pp. 43–4

BonJour's argument was directed at process reliabilism but it seems easy enough to generalize the point to any purely externalist theory. In fact, Michael Bergmann generalizes an objection of this sort and calls it the *subject's perspective objection* (hereafter, the SPO). The idea is that one points out a way in which a subject may satisfy the proposed conditions of justification and yet fail to possess assurance of what the belief has going for it from the subject's perspective. Bergmann characterizes the objection in the following way:

If the subject holding a belief isn't aware of what that belief has going for it, then she isn't aware of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or an arbitrary conviction. From that we may conclude that from her perspective it is an accident that her belief is true. And that implies that it isn't a justified belief.⁵⁵

So, for any view of justification, if the view calls a belief justified and the subject may have no idea from his or her subjective perspective what his or her belief has going for it, then, according to this objection, the view should be rejected.

It is important to note that there is a modal operator at work in typical SPOs. The claim is that if it's even just *possible* that a subject satisfies all of the proposed conditions of justification and yet fails to be aware of what the belief has going for it, the view is open to this objection. The reason for this is that a SPO is best seen as a counterexample intended to show that the proposed conditions of justification are not jointly sufficient for justification.

⁵⁵ Bergmann (2006), p. 12.

Bergmann thinks, however, that the internalist with an awareness requirement faces a dilemma. He asserts that the awareness either “involves *conceiving* of the justification-contributor that is the object of awareness as being in some way relevant to the justification or truth of the belief or it won’t.”⁵⁶ The former is what he calls *strong awareness* and the latter is *weak awareness*. If we imagine a subject with an experientially-based belief, strong awareness would require the subject to not merely be aware of having this experience but to conceive of the experience *as relevant to the truth or justification of the belief*. If the subject does not conceive of it in this particular way, then this would be weak awareness. This is because weak awareness is simply awareness that is not strong. Weak awareness would include awareness that is in no way conceptual as well as awareness that is conceptual in some way other than the conceiving involved in strong awareness.

The consequence for accepting the strong awareness horn is that it leads to a vicious regress since conceiving of the justification-contributor as relevant to the truth or justification of the relevant belief is a judgment that will in turn need to be justified. Said differently, strong awareness requires one to include in the analysis of justification something doxastic that itself will require further justification continuing the regress of justification. If the analysis of justification includes something doxastic, then, simply put, there is no noninferential justification that ends the regress of justification. Thus

⁵⁶ Bergmann (2006), p. 13.

the foundationalist view with an awareness requirement such as this is not getting anything foundational.

If this were not already problem enough, Bergmann argues that the regress is one of ever increasing complexity. Since being strongly aware involves a judgment that will require further justification, one would also have to be strongly aware of whatever one posits as justification for this judgment. This is a regress that is not stopping and as the judgments iterate, this regress looks to be one of ever increasing complexity which will quickly outstrip the human bounds of cognition, thus rendering the regress vicious.

The consequence for taking the weak awareness horn, according to Bergmann, is that one is no better off than the externalist with respect to the SPO. That is, unless the subject conceives of the justification contributor as being justificatorily relevant to the belief, then it will be possible to come up with a case where the subject satisfies the proposed conditions of justification and yet from the subject's perspective the belief is no better than if it were based on a wishful hunch. One could be in pain and one could even conceive of the pain as pain. However, unless one conceives of the experience of pain as relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that one is in pain, then one is not justified in this belief by merely having the experience and having the relevant belief. The only way, according to Bergmann, to block the SPO

is conceive of the experience as epistemically relevant but now we are back on the strong awareness horn of the dilemma.

To his credit, Bergmann engages a variety of prominent internalist views of justification and attempts to show that there is “no escape” from his dilemma. There will not be a need to go through these, though some of what he says there will be useful later. For now, it will be helpful to illustrate how an affirmation of strong awareness and an affirmation of weak awareness and the attendant consequences are supposed to go.

Bergmann gives an example of a man (whom I will call Larry) who has a visual experience as of a dark green triangular shape framed in by a white background. This experience confirmed the thought that there is a dark green triangular shape, which Larry had been entertaining, resulting in the corresponding belief. I will call this experience of Larry’s with this particular content ‘J1’ and the corresponding belief ‘B1’.

If one thinks that Larry is justified on the basis of Larry’s awareness of J1, then Bergmann is going to want to know what sort of awareness Larry has. Let’s say that the awareness in view here is of the strong variety. So being strongly aware of J1 would mean that Larry conceives of J1 as relevant to the truth or justification of B1. But this involves a further judgment that we will call B2.

B2: J1 is relevant to the truth or justification of B1.

One thing we should note here is that if foundationalists concede this point, then B1 ceases to be basic and the foundationalism must seek some other basic belief. The regress lives on and as we'll see becomes vicious in a hurry if one requires strong awareness as a general condition.

B2 is a judgment and so it also needs to be justified. Let's suppose that Larry happens to have justification for this belief which we will call J2. J2 will also need to be conceived in the strong sense and so the corresponding belief will be something like:

B3: J2 is relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that [J1 is relevant to the truth or justification of B1].

B3 is unfortunately in need of further justification still, which we will call J3. If he comes to possess J3, then he will need to be strongly aware of this as well. This will yield yet another belief:

B4: J3 is relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that [J2 is relevant to the truth or justification of the belief that [J1 is relevant to the truth or justification of B1]].

B4 will give way to B5 and so on. It is not clear that we are getting past the first few iterations of this process, given human limitations. Regress of ever increasing complexity ensues.

Let's suppose that we retract the admission of strong awareness and argue that Larry need not make any further judgment about J1. Let's suppose that J1 occurs and Larry is weakly aware of J1 in the sense that he applies no concepts to J1. We would not get the ensuing regress and it would

be a fact that B1 does correspond to J1, but Larry makes no such judgment about the belief's standing in this relation. Is Larry in a positive epistemic situation with respect to B1? The answer is no, since it is possible that Larry has no idea from his subjective perspective what his belief has going for it. This is to say that this sort of account falls prey to the SPO.

The reason for this is that it can be true that one experiences J1 and that one believes B1 but be unaware that J1 is epistemically relevant to B1. This may not typically happen in cognitive experience, but so long as it is *possible* given the account, then the view is open to the SPO. The belief would correspond to the experience but, since Larry may not be aware of the belief's corresponding to the experience, he would not necessarily be aware of what the belief has going for it.

One response to this alleged consequence is skepticism at the idea that one could be having an experience such as J1 while one forms a belief about the content of that experience and not thereby "see" the connection between the belief and experience. Bergmann agrees that this can be "hard to swallow" but nevertheless insists that with the right sort of example before our minds, it should, at least, seem possible.⁵⁷ Suppose the following two conditions are satisfied:

1. S believes that she is having an experience e.
2. S is weakly aware of e.

⁵⁷ See Bergmann (2006), pp. 28-29.

The satisfaction of the above conditions will not block the SPO since 1 and 2 above do not *entail* that S is aware of the epistemic relevance of the experience to the belief. To see this we need only suppose that S has some cognitive malfunction where she is unable to “see” any epistemic connection between the experience and the belief. It is true that she has this sort of experience and it is true that she has the corresponding belief but now, by hypothesis, she fails to be aware of what this belief has to do with the experience. Less dramatically, perhaps S formed the belief as a result of consulting a rather astrological report that told her she was having this experience while being unaware that this belief fit the fact that she really was in this experience. Again, she satisfies 1 and 2 but is unaware of the epistemically relevant connection. If these are *possible* states of affairs, then 1 and 2 are compatible with S being unaware of the epistemic relevance of the experience to the belief.

We should note the symmetry here between the failure of this account and the failure of externalist accounts given the Norman case above.

Norman satisfies the following:

- 1*. Norman believes that the president is in New York.
- 2*. Norman’s belief is produced by a reliable belief-forming process.

Here it is obvious that Norman is not aware of what his belief has going for it since it is built into the case that 2* is purely external. However, even if we change the case and make Norman aware of his clairvoyant abilities and their being reliable, it wouldn’t help him in an epistemic sense, unless he was

aware of the fact that this particular belief was the product of reliable clairvoyance. It would only be then that he was aware of what his belief had going for it. So the upshot here is that externalist theories of justification and the internalist account with only weak awareness, so construed, have the same problem. The believing subject, despite possessing an epistemic virtue, may fail to be aware of what the belief has going for it. If the believing subject is not aware of what the belief has going for it, then possession of the epistemic virtue is not sufficient for justification. This is to say that these views fall prey to the SPO.

Bergmann presents his dilemma as the following:

1. An essential feature of internalism is that it makes a subject's actual or potential *awareness* of some justification-contributor a necessary condition for the justification of any belief held by that subject.
2. The awareness required by internalism is either *strong* awareness or *weak* awareness.
3. If the awareness required by internalism is strong awareness, then internalism has vicious regress problems leading to radical skepticism.
4. If the awareness required by internalism is weak awareness, then internalism is vulnerable to the SPO, in which case internalism loses its main motivation for imposing the awareness requirement.
5. If internalism either leads to radical skepticism or loses its main motivation for imposing the weak awareness requirement (i.e. avoiding the SPO), then we should not endorse internalism.

Therefore, we should not endorse internalism.⁵⁸

It should be pointed out that one may reject premise 5 on the grounds that there are perhaps other motivations for holding to internalism. In other words, the internalist of the weak variety might be willing to concede that the

⁵⁸ Bergmann (2006), p. 13-14.

view falls prey to the SPO and give up on avoiding it as the main motivation for internalism. The internalist might think that there are still plausible motivations independent of the dilemma for the internalism. Bergmann spends a considerable amount of time canvassing other motivations and theories that do not explicitly require awareness and argues that each of these is untenable in their own right.⁵⁹ Thus, if internalism is ill-motivated, this makes way for Bergmann to suggest dropping the awareness requirement and give his proper functionalist theory of justification.

1.4 The Dilemma Generally Formulated

So we have seen three formulations of a very similar sort of dilemma. I have called each of these “Sellarsian dilemmas.” It’s true, however, that they each have different aims and the views of these philosophers would not be necessarily friendly with one another. For example, Bergmann’s aim, as a staunch externalist, was to make a problem for all internalists, both foundationalist, coherentist and otherwise. BonJour, on the other hand, was himself an internalist coherentist when he formulated his dilemma. So Bergmann’s dilemma would be a problem for BonJour. In SEK, BonJour was looking to defeat foundationalism of any form. Bergmann’s proper

⁵⁹ He considers two versions of mentalism as advocated by Conee and Feldman and as advocated by Cruz and Pollock in chapter 3 of Bergmann (2006). In chapter 4, Bergmann considers deontology as an alternate motivation for internalism.

functionalist view seems properly classified as externalist foundationalism. So BonJour's arguments would make trouble for Bergmann.⁶⁰

The overlap of these dilemmas is internalist foundationalism. Each dilemma canvassed above poses a problem for the internalist with a foundationalist structure. It will be useful to formulate the dilemma into a generalized form that captures the basic problem facing the internalist foundationalist. Each of the dilemmas that we have considered has what I refer to as a *doxastic horn*. The consistent claim is that without some doxastic attitude, the justifier, which is alleged to be noninferential, can't do any justificatory work. There has been a genuine difference in the ways in which the philosophers we have considered have thought that the justifier needed to be doxastic. Sellars thought that recognition of the authority of observation report was needed. BonJour argued that one must cognitively grasp or apprehend the content of the experience for it to justify. Bergmann thought one must conceive of the justification-contributor as relevant to the truth or justification of the belief. The problem is, of course, that if a further doxastic attitude enters into this justifying state, then the justification is not noninferential. More justification will be needed and this perpetuates the very regress the state was designed to end. However, if there is nothing doxastic that would require further justification figuring into the justifying state, then the state is not up to the job of justifying. Bergmann's SPO nicely

⁶⁰ It is BonJour's Norman the Clairvoyant thought experiment that really addresses the problem with Bergmann's externalism which BonJour uses to argue for premise 3 of his dilemma.

specifies the problematic consequence that attends what I call the *nondoxastic horn*. It seems to me that the worry that both Sellars and Bonjour had about embracing the nondoxastic horn of their respective dilemmas is captured by the SPO.

In dilemma form:

- Either...
- (i) (the doxastic horn) the alleged noninferentially justifying state is doxastic in a way that provides justification but itself requires further justification perpetuating the regress.

 - Or
 - (ii) (the nondoxastic horn) the alleged noninferentially justifying state is not doxastic in the way specified in (i) but is unable by itself to provide justification.

Either horn purports to devastate a foundationalist epistemology.

CHAPTER 2: SOLVING THE DILEMMA

It is my view that the Sellarsian dilemma raises substantive problems for internalist foundationalism. In fact, I think that the dilemma is rather effective against foundationalist views that are not sensitive to the problems it raises. But, though it clears the field, I do not think that the problem is insurmountable and will offer a generalized solution for blocking the dilemma. The solution will come with a price. In fact, I think that it puts into sharp focus the nature of foundational justification thought of in broadly internalist terms. After some relevant preliminaries, I will sketch (and develop further in subsequent chapters) a theory of noninferential justification that I see as the most plausible way of filling in the details of the general solution.

It will be important to first say why one should think that the Sellarsian dilemma is an important problem. I will argue that it is effective only if one takes the satisfaction of a certain epistemic desideratum as important in an epistemological theory. I will argue that though there may be other epistemic desiderata, the desideratum that motivates the Sellarsian dilemma is primary. This will be to say that there are no easy “outs” to the dilemma.

2.1 Epistemic Desiderata

Epistemologists have identified a litany of putative epistemic virtues that may be possessed by a belief. Some of these may be possessed in such a

way that their instantiation is inaccessible to the first person consciousness of the believing subject. Put another way, though the virtue is had by the belief and the virtue may be relevant in some sense to our epistemic evaluation of the belief, it is a feature of which the believing subject is unaware. The feature is external. In the way that I will be thinking of these notions, when a belief has only external features that are epistemically relevant, it is not possible (even by careful reflection and introspection) to discover from one's subjective perspective (perhaps while sitting in an armchair) that they are true. One might be able to (get out of the armchair and) conduct further investigation into whether or not the external features obtain but, according to externalist theories, when the external feature(s) do in fact obtain, the subject may be justified without having to do this further work. Typical external features that have been proposed as justification-conferring include a belief's being caused by the truthmaker of the belief, being formed by a reliable cognitive process, being formed by a properly functioning cognitive faculty, the fact that the belief tracks the truth, and so on. Each of these may be instantiated without the believing subject being aware of its instantiation.

As we mentioned in chapter 1, Bonjour's famous case of Norman the Clairvoyant was intended to argue that purely external virtues, such as the reliability of one's belief forming process, are irrelevant to the rationality of

holding that belief from the perspective of the believing subject. Here is that case again:

Norman, under certain conditions which usually obtain, is a completely reliable clairvoyant with respect to certain kinds of subject matter. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Norman comes to believe that the President is in New York City, though he has no evidence either for or against this belief. In fact, the belief is true and results from his clairvoyant power under circumstances in which it is completely reliable.⁶¹

Even though many find it intuitively obvious that, at least for Norman, the belief has nothing epistemically positive going for it, this intuition is not without its critics. Sven Bernecker has recently said:

I think it is questionable whether the clairvoyance example poses a threat to externalist reliabilism. The intuitive plausibility of the thought experiment hinges on the presumption that clairvoyance is *not* reliable. Yet if a clairvoyant faculty actually existed, then either it would prove itself reliable or not. If it proved itself reliable, then intuitively there would be no reason to deny clairvoyants justification and knowledge. BonJour's internalist interpretation of the thought experiment presupposes a bias against clairvoyance.⁶²

I am not sure that BonJour has any ill will towards clairvoyance, contrary to what Bernecker here says. The intuition does not seem to me to presume the unreliability of clairvoyance. In fact, it is stated, by hypothesis, that Norman's clairvoyance *is* a reliable belief forming cognitive process, something which Bernecker admits himself when he is first describing BonJour's case.

⁶¹ BonJour (1985), p. 41.

⁶² Bernecker (2008), p. 166.

Bernecker seems to be thinking that those who claim clairvoyance (in the actual world) are typically unreliable and this tempts Bonjour and others to think that Norman is not in an epistemically positive situation. This, however, seems completely irrelevant to our intuitions when we are clear that, in the imagined scenario, Norman's clairvoyance is in fact completely reliable. Bernecker says that if clairvoyance *proved* itself reliable, then our intuitions would change. But this is only the case, if it proved itself reliable for Norman's cognitive life. However, this just changes the case since it is no longer purely external features figuring into the picture. The intuition should not change at all if we became convinced that clairvoyant powers existed and that they were reliable belief-forming processes.

What the Norman case is meant to illustrate is that purely external epistemic factors are of no use from the perspective of the believing subject. Purely external factors, by definition, cannot constitute a rational basis for the belief for the believing subject, since the subject is, by definition again, unaware of these factors. The belief is no better than a (clearly unjustified) lucky hunch from the subject's perspective. So, rather than hinging on some bias against clairvoyance, the thought experiment relies on the intuition that when one fails to possess a subjective rational basis for a belief, the belief is not justified. However, this runs contrary to the externalist claim that one could be justified despite there being no justifying features of which the subject is aware.

If this is the right intuition, then it seems that we should rather easily be able to apply the Norman case to any other externalist theory with the same intuitive outcome. We could shift the relevant external feature of the case to the fact that his clairvoyant powers are functioning properly in the environment for which they were designed while he fails to have any awareness of his belief being the product of this properly functioning clairvoyance. Or to the fact that his belief tracks the truth while Norman is unaware of his belief's tracking the truth. In each case that we come up with, from Norman's perspective, the belief, which may instantiate any number of external features, has nothing going for it. It would be no better from his perspective for him to continue holding it than it would be for him to drop it. No matter what the proposed justification-conferring external feature is, the result should be the same.

Despite the intuitive force of the above, in giving his positive view, Bergmann claims that Norman is perfectly justified in his belief that the president is in New York so long as the cognitive faculties that produced this belief are functioning properly. He says:

BonJour's examples of reliable clairvoyants which he uses against externalism won't work against [his proper functionalist account] unless it is stipulated that the cognizers in question form these clairvoyant beliefs when their faculties are functioning properly.⁶³

Though it certainly is not specified, given the way that BonJour describes the case, I see no reason to think that Norman's faculty of clairvoyance is not

⁶³ Bergmann (2006). p. 141.

functioning properly. Since all that is said is that the belief that the president is in New York is reliably produced, it seems at least implied that this is a properly functioning faculty. I suppose the case as told by Bonjour is consistent with Norman having a malfunctioning faculty that fortuitously results in clairvoyant powers that will tend to produce true beliefs and is thus reliable. In any case, we can make explicit that Norman's clairvoyance is functioning properly just as it was designed and is in the proper environment and so forth and the intuition looks to be the same. None of this changes the fact that Norman still has no reason to think that his belief has anything whatsoever going for it.

However, when it is made explicit that Norman's clairvoyance is functioning properly, Bergmann thinks we should have quite the opposite intuition. He says:

...but once [proper functioning] is stipulated, we have to admit that their clairvoyant beliefs are no more strange than our a priori or memory or perceptual beliefs. And then we lose the intuition that the beliefs in the example aren't justified.⁶⁴

This strikes me as a rather astonishing claim. He is equating Norman's epistemic situation, who is aware of nothing that could make a subjective epistemic difference, with the epistemic situation of one who has an ordinary belief on the basis of perception, someone who presumably is quite aware of the experiential base.⁶⁵ My point is not that a belief that is formed on the

⁶⁴ Bergmann (2006). p. 141.

basis of perception will necessarily be a justified belief. My point is rather that a belief that pops out of nowhere (from one's perspective) is *much stranger* than a belief that is the result of perceptual experience.

To show that this is not an isolated incident for Bergmann, earlier in the book, he describes a case that has some striking resemblance to the Norman case. He says:

Imagine alien cognizers who form the belief that there is water nearby via a belief-forming process that bypasses their other mental states. Suppose, for example, that water in the environment of these aliens causes in them the belief that there is water nearby, without using any other mental states as intermediate causes of those beliefs. And suppose, furthermore, that these beliefs are not only reliably formed but also formed in accord with what counts as proper function for these cognizers...Once again, these beliefs seem, intuitively, to be justified beliefs even though they are caused directly by events that are entirely external to the believer.⁶⁵

This is analogous to the Norman case so long as the aliens do not possess any internal evidence of the reliability or proper functioning of this cognitive ability. In other words, they cannot have a track record argument for the reliability of this faculty or testimonial evidence from the other aliens

⁶⁵ Of course, he also mentions *a priori* and memory beliefs. I would argue that *a priori* beliefs and memory beliefs are also disanalogous to the Norman case. The relevant feature of the Norman case is that there is absolutely no internal cause or justifier for the belief. It just pops into his head as the result of his clairvoyance. Even for *a priori* justification, on my view, the belief about, say, some simple truth of arithmetic doesn't just pop into heads where we have no internal recourse to judge the merits of the belief. A full treatment of this point falls outside the scope of this project.

⁶⁶ Bergmann (2006). p. 64. The context of this quote is that he is arguing against Conee and Feldman's mentalism according to which justification is only due to mental items. He is arguing that it is intuitively that one could fail to have any mental items whatsoever and still be justified. In this connection, he also gives a case of divine revelation where God directly causes a belief in one. He says "it is possible for God, if he exists, to reveal things to us (thereby giving us justified beliefs in the truths so revealed) by directly causing beliefs in us, without the causal intermediation of other mental states.

extolling the virtues of their ability to detect nearby water. Again, if anything like this internal evidence is true of the alien case, then we do not have purely external factors doing the justificatory work, which is what Bergmann is after in this example. So we should understand this case to be one in which the aliens lack any subjective assurance at all for thinking that their beliefs are reliably caused or the result of properly functioning cognitive faculties.

To make this clear let's suppose that it is a single alien that has been separated from the rest of the alien civilization and has a dramatic case of amnesia but, given the proper functioning of her water-locating faculty, finds herself believing that there is water nearby for no reason discernable from her perspective. Even though the amnesia is of course a malfunction, we may suppose that the alien's water-locating ability is not affected by this malfunction. Though Bergmann admits that his example will probably not convince the committed internalist, he seems to think that we should all find the notion that the lost alien's belief is justified to be perfectly intuitive.

What is striking about this is not that Bergmann is sticking to his case that the alien with the properly functioning cognitive ability would be justified in her belief since, after all, these claims come in the midst of defending a proper functionalist account of justification.⁶⁷ It would be odd for

⁶⁷ Bergmann's theory of justification is: S's belief B is justified *iff* i) S does not take B to be defeated and ii) the cognitive faculties producing B are a) functioning properly, b) truth-aimed and c) reliable in the environments for which they were 'designed'. See Bergmann (2006), p. 133.

us to expect anything else from a proper functionalist. What is striking is that what Bergmann thinks we should all find intuitively plausible is precisely the opposite of what BonJour thinks we should take away from these sorts of cases.⁶⁸

What's going on here? One possible explanation is that externalists, like Bergmann, and internalists, like BonJour, differ over what it is to have a rational (as in evidential) basis for a belief. I myself do not think that this is the right assessment. I can't imagine that Bergmann thinks Norman or the lost alien possess rational assurance for the truth of their respective beliefs when they lack all subjective evidence for their beliefs. Bergmann's dilemma was supposed to show that securing this sort of assurance is not possible in all cases. So, he explicitly eschews any internalist awareness requirement as necessary for justification and, by virtue of this, embraces the impossibility of subjective rational assurance in all cases of justification.

A more plausible explanation for what is going on here is that Bergmann and BonJour are differing over what they are specifically saying is intuitively plausible about the case, though they are both using the term "justification" to refer to it. That is, it seems reasonable to suppose that Bergmann is putting into service an altogether different concept of epistemic justification from BonJour and other internalists.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ It would be different if Bergmann thought of this as the biting of a bullet though a necessary one given that all other internalist alternatives are problematic.

William Alston has argued that there are, in effect, as many notions of ‘justification’ as there are theories of justification. He thinks that “instead of having persistent disagreements about a common target, [epistemologists] are arguing past each other.”⁷⁰ Alston thinks it is possible that the many views that have been proposed in the history of epistemology are importantly different not in the sense that one is right and the others are wrong but in the sense that theorists are after different goals or targets of evaluation.⁷¹ Alston seemed to be struck by the fact that though one may think that being produced by a reliable belief forming process is not a necessary condition for justification, all things being equal, one should still think that it is a desirable thing for one to have a belief so formed. He thought that given the wide range of proposals and the equal conviction for opposing views, this implies that there is not just one property of justification about which we are disagreeing but a plurality of properties, many of which may be of interest in the broad pursuit of epistemic evaluation. He says, in another work of a similar theme, that with the broad scope of proposed views in mind and the fact that these views have been “nourished” by various traditions with their different emphases:

...there does not seem to be enough commonality in their pre-theoretical understanding of the nature of epistemic justification to

⁶⁹ There is a sense in which this is trivially true since any externalist concept will differ from a concept that is characterized as internalist. The claim is that they are both pointing to different aspects that may fall under the concept justification, broadly construed.

⁷⁰ Alston (2005), p. 26.

⁷¹ Alston (2005), p. 4.

warrant us in supposing that there is some uniquely identifiable item about which they hold different views. It seems, rather, that they are highlighting, emphasizing, “pushing” different concepts, all called ‘justification.’ It seems...that they are selecting different epistemic desiderata, or packages thereof, as deserving of the honorific title ‘justification.’⁷²

The upshot for Alston is that we should recognize and identify the respective targets of our epistemic evaluation and in this way stop talking past one another. Given the plurality desiderata, Alston recommends:

We recognize an irreducible plurality of positive epistemic statuses-- epistemic desiderata- of beliefs, each of which defines a distinctive dimension of epistemic evaluation. We then conduct the epistemology of belief by studying these several [epistemic desiderata], their *nature*, their *interrelations*, their *viability*, and their *importance* for the success of the cognitive enterprise.⁷³

There is a lot of what Alston has to say with which I agree. It seems to me that there are an assortment of aims and targets that are at home in varying degrees with different accounts of justification. One target of epistemic evaluation could be the deontic responsibility of a cognitive subject in forming appropriate beliefs. When one has done what could reasonably be expected of one, then one might think that one is justified in this deontological sense. However, this may be very different from a view, such as, say, reliabilism, that target a tight connection to the truth as an epistemic desideratum. It is tempting for the deontologist and the reliabilist to argue that their respective views are the more intuitive and best account for a wide

⁷² Alston (1993), p. 534.

⁷³ Alston (2005), p. 47.

range of cases that we consider paradigm instances of justification. However, it does seem plausible to me that these are after distinct desiderata and they need not, in principle, be in conflict.⁷⁴

So why does Bergmann think that it is intuitively plausible that the properly functioning Norman is justified? It's not because this Norman has any more of a subjective rational basis than the reliable Norman. I think that Bergmann's claim amounts to this: it is *intuitively plausible* that the belief of the properly functioning Norman has something epistemically good going for it. The belief is the result of a properly functioning cognitive process that is reliable in an environment for which it was designed and this is of some epistemic value. BonJour, on the other hand, thinks that it is *intuitively plausible* that Norman's belief has a deficiency no matter the external virtue. From Norman's perspective, the belief has nothing going for it and this is what is of interest to BonJour and other internalists. With these distinct desiderata identified, there is nothing obviously incompatible about these claims of intuitive plausibility. Bergmann, I take it, would admit that Norman's belief has nothing going for it from Norman's perspective. BonJour could concede that a properly functioning cognitive faculty is of epistemic value for the reasons mentioned above.

In the next section I will argue that, contrary to Alston, there is a primary epistemic desideratum that captures what has been important to

⁷⁴ This is not to say that these sorts of epistemologies could not have the same target of epistemic evaluation. The deontologist could argue that a belief for which the subject is *epistemically* blameless in believing does relate one to the truth.

both internalists and externalists. The desideratum I have in mind is not satisfied in the case of Norman the clairvoyant and explains the intuition that Norman is in a deficient epistemic situation. The externalist will no doubt disagree that this is the primary epistemic desideratum but it seems to me that this is typically the case only after this desideratum seems to prove too stringent. I will have more to say about addressing this worry in later chapters and will argue that the desideratum that I have in mind is mundanely achieved in noninferential cognition.

2.2 Epistemic Assurance from the Subject's Perspective

It has been at least historically prominent to think of the epistemic status of a belief as being a matter that crucially involves the subject's perspective, something that provides subjective rational assurance. The epistemic desideratum, in the way that I am thinking of it, is not (nor is it coextensive with) mere *psychological assurance*, where we mean by psychological assurance something of a mere feeling of confidence. One could feel quite confident and psychologically assured that one's lottery ticket is a winner and this turn out to be the product of unjustified wishful thinking. We might feel psychologically assured in many cases in which we are epistemically justified, but clearly psychological confidence is not sufficient for the sort of assurance that is of an epistemic nature.⁷⁵ The sort of

⁷⁵ Moreover, it seems to me possible that one could be epistemically justified and fail to have psychological confidence. That is, psychological assurance may also not be necessary for epistemic justification. This is perhaps a more controversial claim but I would argue that

assurance we are after has to do with one's belief being related in some more or less direct way to the truth. Mere psychological assurance does not necessarily, or we might say intrinsically, have such a relation. To denote this sort of assurance as opposed to mere psychological assurance, we'll call the assurance that we are after *epistemic assurance*.

It is reasonably clear what it is to fail to have epistemic assurance. BonJour's Norman the clairvoyant fails to have epistemic assurance since, from his perspective, there is nothing that would provide any assurance. It is more difficult to say what, in a general sense, it is to have this sort of assurance. We will think of epistemic assurance somewhat colloquially as awareness of what a belief has going for it, in an epistemic sense. But what does it mean for a belief to have something "going for it" in an epistemic sense? I think what it means is that the belief has some likelihood of being true relative to one's overall epistemic situation. That is, a belief's being true or being at least likely to be true is not accidental. There is some reason in virtue of which the belief stands in this relation to the truth and one is aware of this reason. So epistemic assurance is the awareness of some property or properties that when instantiated by a belief makes likely the belief.

one could possess ideal justification from the subject's perspective for the belief that p but be in the grip of a wildly irrational philosophical theory that causes one to lose one's confidence with respect to the belief that p. If it is possible to retain the belief and its justification while losing one's confidence in the rationality of the belief, then this seems properly described as a case in which one has justification without psychological assurance. I am willing to concede that a case such as this may be best construed as a case in which the justification of the belief has been defeated. However, this turns on whether the mere belief in an opposing view is sufficient to defeat one's justification.

I will have more to say about this later but, for now, it is important to note that achieving epistemic assurance does not entail that a believing subject has reflected upon his or her epistemic situation. This desideratum is satisfied merely by an awareness of the belief's being truth-connected and it is possible to have this awareness in the act of believing. I will be rejecting the thought that one must reflect upon or even be able to reflect upon one's overall situation in order to be aware of what the belief has going for it, especially if this will require further beliefs. So, for me, there will be no meta-awareness requirement. It will often be the case that one could, if one so chose, reflect upon one's overall epistemic situation. The point is that one neither needs to, nor even needs to be able to engage in this sort of reflection in order to possess epistemic assurance as I understand it.

Notice that if Norman were to be aware of what his belief that the president is in New York had going for it, epistemically speaking, then we would not think of Norman in a deficient epistemic light. The central point of the case is that Norman is without awareness of any relation that his belief is standing in to the truth and thus lacks any assurance with respect to this belief.

Additionally we should say who it is that is getting assured here. Externalist theories of justification typically secure a tight connection between justified beliefs and the truth. The problem is that we, as outside observers, are aware of this connection but the believing subject is not (at

least not in all cases). BonJour makes the following point in connection with offering the Norman case:

One reason why externalism may seem initially plausible is that if the external relation in question genuinely obtains, then Norman will in fact not go wrong in accepting the belief, and it is, *in a sense*, not an accident that this is so: it would not be an accident from the standpoint of our hypothetical external observer who knows all the relevant facts and laws. But how is this supposed to justify Norman's belief? From his subjective perspective, it *is* an accident that the belief is true.⁷⁶

I am happy to concede that there are many external features that may be had by a belief or a belief-forming process or even the believer him or herself that may relate the relevant belief to truth in more or less interesting ways. But these only make the belief's connection to the truth non-accidental from the perspective of those for whom it is stipulated they obtain. However, in this project, I am not interested in an account that makes plain the connection to truth for the outside observer. I am interested in an account that provides epistemic assurance as it relates to the truth *from the perspective of the believing subject*. More precisely, I am interested in an account of justification, the satisfaction of which, would provide the believing subject with epistemic assurance in all cases.

One initial reason to think that epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject is the primary epistemic desideratum is that, in ordinary circumstances, we tend to demand some sort of internal evidence for the rational justification of a belief. It seems to me that on a purely intuitive

⁷⁶ BonJour (1985), p. 43–4

basis, epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective is simply the way we think of epistemic justification, at least pretheoretically. Suppose that I memorize and take as true a complicated answer to a mathematical problem that happens to be true, though I possess no reason for thinking that it is true. I am imagining a case in which I would not have the slightest idea of how to go about proving the answer, given its complexity. I simply take the answer as true and I can recite it if I so chose. Intuitively, it seems that I am not justified in this belief. However, suppose that the answer came from a mathematical super-genius (though, again, I am completely unaware of this fact). It is true that this belief has something going for it: it was formulated by a super-genius and is true. Moreover, any belief that has the super-genius as its origin will tend to be correct. But unless we are aware of these facts it is not clear why it should count positively towards the evaluation of *my* believing it. The thought is that, intuitively, we should have precisely the same evaluation when it comes to a belief that has only an external virtue.⁷⁷

A further reason to think that epistemic assurance from the perspective of the believing subject is the primary epistemic desideratum is that the traditional skeptical worry turns on the essential nature of this desideratum. To be sure, part of the skeptical worry is that a "good" belief is one that is true or likely to be true. In discussions about skepticism, it is

⁷⁷ The externalist will no doubt reject the analogy here and there may even be good reasons to do so. The point of the example is simply to say that, intuitively speaking, there is a real worry about why facts of which the believing subject is unaware should constitute justification for the subject's belief.

sometimes emphasized that the hypothetical skeptical scenarios are a problem because we are not able to say why ordinary beliefs are more likely to be true than beliefs involving evil demons, The Matrix or other familiar hypotheses. It might seem possible to circumvent the worry by developing a theory where the belief is tied tightly to the truth. It seems to me that process reliabilism accomplishes this connection. Assuming the reliabilist can figure out a nonarbitrary way of specifying a reliable process-type, where the beliefs produced by tokens of this type are likely to be true, then a tight connection is achieved.

However, the skeptic will likely be unimpressed, since she will want to know how she should go about selecting the processes that are relevantly reliable. When no answer to this question is forthcoming, she'll wonder why something of which she is completely unaware helps her out of the worry about skepticism. In a more recent work from the one we discussed above, Bonjour spells out just what the problem is for a view eschewing the need for assurance from the subject's perspective. He says:

Externalists often write misleadingly as though from a perspective in which the reasons that are unavailable to the ordinary believer are apparent to them: from which, for example, it is obvious that our perceptual beliefs about medium-sized physical objects are reliably caused and so mostly true. But in fact, if externalism is the only solution to the regress problem, *there is no such perspective available to anyone*, no perspective from which anyone ever has good reasons to think that anyone's beliefs of any sort are in fact reliably caused. Thus the externalist should speak instead of the mere *possibility* that beliefs are, in ways that are inaccessible to anyone, reliably caused; and hence

of the *possibility*, which may or may not be realized, that they are, in the externalist sense, justified.⁷⁸

BonJour seemed to think that whatever the appeal of externalism is it could not be as an interesting response to the skeptic.

On the other hand, the concern might be about subjective assurance. It might even seem possible to defend a view where the believing subject has some sort of assurance in all cases. It seems to me that epistemic conservatism might be such a view. This is a view according to which the mere fact that one has a belief that *p* provides some justification for the belief that *p*. Every time the subject has a belief, then on the basis of the fact that the subject has that belief, absent defeaters, the belief enjoys some justification on this view. It would seem that in all cases, the subject has at least this assurance. Skeptical theses would not get off the ground but the skeptic will wonder why the mere belief gives one a reason that is epistemic, that is truth-connected.

So it seems that a combination of these fundamental desiderata capture in one desideratum what has been important to various theorists of justification who have defended a wide range of views. We want a belief that is non-accidentally truth-connected and the subject who possesses the belief to enjoy assurance of this connection. At the very least, it seems more desirable to have a belief that satisfies this combined desideratum, than either desideratum singly. Moreover, as I will make clear in a moment, it is

⁷⁸ BonJour (2003), p. 40.

spelling out an account that satisfies this desideratum which solves the Sellarsian dilemma for the foundationalist.

A final point about this specified desideratum is that we seeking conditions of justification the satisfaction of which secures epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject *in all possible cases*.⁷⁹ Thus we'll ask whether or not there is a possible case in which the prescribed conditions of justification are satisfied and yet the subject fails to possess epistemic assurance. This will be to make use of, in Bergmann's terminology, the subject's perspective objection (SPO). Epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject requires conditions, the satisfaction of which, *necessarily* provide the believing subject with epistemic assurance.

Given this desideratum, and though I will have a lot to say relating to the overall debate, I am not thinking of this project as a defense of the overall plausibility of internalism *per se* over externalist alternatives.⁸⁰ My view is of course internalist and there will be various objections I will consider which will come from externalist theorists. However, I am specifically focused on providing an account of noninferential justification that secures epistemic assurance from the perspective of the believing subject in all cases.⁸¹

⁷⁹ This is of course due to the fact that we are giving a philosophical account of the concept of justification. We are not after an account that is true in most cases or even all actual cases. It must be true in all possible cases.

⁸⁰ One reason for this is that there's no doubt that some internalist views will not share this desideratum.

⁸¹ I will not have much to say about inferential justification nor will I be specifically addressing *a priori* justification.

This being said, the foregoing discussion about epistemic desiderata calls for comment on whether or not, on my view, there is a genuine debate between the internalist and the externalist about justification. As I have said above, I think that there are many ways to epistemically evaluate a belief, some of which are perfectly legitimate and interesting. However, I do not think that the internalist and the externalist are merely talking past one another in all ways. In fact, I will have quite a lot to say to the externalist since it is seemingly ubiquitous amongst externalists to think that a substantive internalist account with the desideratum I have identified above cannot avoid radical skepticism. I will be defending a view of noninferential justification that I think does provide the believing subject with epistemic assurance in all cases of noninferentially justified beliefs.⁸² Herein lies a fundamental disagreement amongst internalists and externalists. I see this work as a contribution to that debate.

2.3 A Solution to the Dilemma

We are now in a position to see how this relates to the Sellarsian dilemma. In the same way that epistemic assurance from the perspective of the believing subject, as a desideratum, drives the traditional skeptical worry, it likewise drives and motivates the Sellarsian dilemma as a problem

⁸² Admittedly, this will not be enough to avoid skepticism about ordinary beliefs about the external world. This is because I do not think that ordinary beliefs about the external world are justified noninferentially. So though I take myself to avoid radical skepticism by this noninferential view, it will take an additional account of inferential justification in order avoid external world skepticism.

for the foundationalist. To see this, we should emphasize that crucial to any defense of foundationalism is to specify a state that provides justification without itself needing further justification. If we look at our representative dilemmas, both BonJour and Bergmann are explicit that the internalist foundationalist cannot secure epistemic assurance in the foundations.⁸³ They both argued, in effect, that to try and provide the subject with epistemic assurance in all possible cases would require injecting into the analysis something doxastic that would require further justification. Thus the state of justification is not noninferential after all. What was crucial to the dilemma Sellars himself offered is that one recognizes the epistemic authority of a foundational belief. Sellars seemed to think that a belief's being based on experience was not by itself an epistemic or cognitive fact that could figure into the logical space of reasons. It took a recognition of the authority, which amounts to conceptual judgments that would themselves have to be justified.

At least one natural way to understand the claims here is that without a further doxastic attitude (that will require further justification), such as a recognition or a grasping of the alleged justifying state, the belief is not any better, epistemically speaking, than a belief that fails to have any justification. But notice that this is crucially from the perspective of the subject. It is possible that one may concede that one's view cannot provide epistemic assurance in all cases and that this implies that epistemic

⁸³ Of course, BonJour thinks that foundationalism is the problem while Bergmann thinks that internalism is the problem.

assurance is not necessary for epistemic justification. This is, of course, to embrace the consequence of the nondoxastic horn of the dilemma and this is precisely what the externalist concedes (and perhaps some internalists too). The cost of this is that one will have to live with an SPO case suitably rendered such that the believing subject in the case satisfies one's proposed conditions of justification while being entirely unaware of what the belief has going for it. However, since this strikes me as utterly counter to my intuitions about what it is to be rationally justified, we must contend with the Sellarsian dilemma.

Here is the dilemma generally formulated:

- Either...
- (i) (the doxastic horn) the alleged noninferentially justifying state is doxastic in a way that provides justification but itself requires further justification perpetuating the regress.
- Or
- (ii) (the nondoxastic horn) the alleged noninferentially justifying state is not doxastic in the way specified in (i) but is unable by itself to provide justification.

One way to achieve epistemic assurance is for the believing subject to know or justifiedly believe that his belief has an epistemic virtue. However, this looks like it would be to affirm the doxastic horn of the dilemma. Recall that affirming the doxastic horn is to posit something doxastic in the analysis of noninferential justification that requires further justification. If one must know or even justifiedly believe that one's belief has an epistemic virtue, then this would be to include something doxastic in the alleged state of noninferential justification. This move will obviously not terminate the

regress. However, if we embrace the nondoxastic horn and it is possible to formulate an SPO case, then the view will not necessarily secure epistemic assurance. So in order to solve the Sellarsian dilemma, we are after epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject that will terminate the regress of justification. In order to achieve this, the subject needs to be aware of some state that necessarily makes an epistemic difference without anything doxastic (requiring further justification) being constitutive of the state.

Embracing the doxastic horn of the dilemma seems to me to be the way of disaster for the foundationalist. The reason is that the alleged foundation turns out *not* to be the foundation. There will be something there that needs to be justified further and the regress of justification does not terminate. In fact, if justification requires what's specified in the doxastic horn, then a doxastic element will keep getting injected at each new level of justification. There will be no way of stopping the need for further justification at each level of the regress making it viciously infinite.⁸⁴ So, I think if there is any

⁸⁴ Thomas Crisp has argued that the regress is not vicious. He argues one can believe a proposition is true without representing the complexity of the belief in thought. One can, in effect, always move up a level and each level will be no more complex than the object level. If each level is intuitively obvious, then, Crisp argues, each level is justified. Two crucial points of Crisp's position seem dubious. One is the idea that one could believe a proposition without representing the complexity of the proposition before our minds. The other is that merely finding something intuitively obvious confers justification. In any case, this alleged solution doesn't help the foundationalist who thinks that it is crucial to terminate the regress of justification. See Crisp (2010).

hope for internalist foundationalism it is to be found in the nondoxastic horn.⁸⁵

It will be helpful to look at two views that embrace the nondoxastic horn that I think clearly fall prey to the SPO. What I hope to show by this is how powerful the Sellarsian dilemma can be against otherwise plausible views. This will also motivate a general solution to the dilemma.

Earl Conee and Richard Feldman offer the following influential view of epistemic justification that seems to be an attempt at achieving the relevant epistemic goal:

Evidentialism: Doxastic attitude D toward proposition p is epistemically justified for S at t if and only if having D toward p fits the evidence S has at t.⁸⁶

There is some question as to whether the evidentialist thesis by itself entails internalism. This all depends upon how one understands “evidence” that one has and what it is to “have” it. Conee and Feldman are confirmed internalists and are explicit about intending to defend an internalist theory

⁸⁵ Bonjour, at one point, concedes the strong horn of Bergmann’s dilemma but argues that no regress is produced since the further judgment does not require anything more than what is present in the justifying state. It might be possible to argue that though justification is required no *further* justification is required. Perhaps the alleged justifying state has within it the capacity to justify this doxastic element. I am not too optimistic about this possibility but, to be clear, this would not be an affirmation of the doxastic horn, as I have made the distinction. The doxastic horn requires that one include in the analysis something doxastic requiring *further* justification. There is logical space in the nondoxastic horn for there to be something doxastic that does not require further justification. I don’t find any of these options plausible.

⁸⁶ Conee and Feldman (2004), p. 83.

of justification. Towards this end, they couple their evidentialist thesis with the thesis of mentalism:

Mentalism: The justificatory status of a person's doxastic attitudes strongly supervenes on the person's occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and conditions.⁸⁷

An implication of the mentalist thesis is that there is a necessary connection between one's evidence and the justificatory status of one's doxastic attitude. They say, "mental duplicates in different possible worlds have the same attitudes justified for them."⁸⁸ This is in contrast to externalist views, since the externalist typically thinks that a doxastic attitude's justificatory status is a contingent matter.

Conee and Feldman see mentalism as internalist, indeed as a kind of minimalist commitment of internalism, since it posits that "a person's beliefs are justified only by things that are internal to the person's mental life."⁸⁹ Conee and Feldman do not identify any kind of explicit awareness requirement in either thesis. This is problematic since it seems right to think that there exist some mental items of which we are unaware. However, it seems to me quite natural to understand S's 'having evidence' as including an implicit awareness requirement. That is, even if it were the case that S's occurrent and dispositional mental states fit D, if these mental states are

⁸⁷ Conee and Feldman (2004), p. 56.

⁸⁸ Conee and Feldman (2004), p. 56.

⁸⁹ Conee and Feldman (2004), p. 55.

completely inaccessible to S, then it is strained to talk of inaccessible mental states serving as *evidence* for S. It seems much more plausible that the mental states in view here are (or should be) those to which we have some sort of access, those of which we are aware.⁹⁰ So, when is doxastic attitude D epistemically justified on this way of understanding Conee and Feldman? The answer is when D fits the evidence which is constituted by mental states of which the subject is, at least in principle, aware.

Let's suppose that S believes that she is in pain and it is true that she is in pain. Since we are going with the nondoxastic horn, let's also say that S is nonconceptually aware of this pain. This looks as if it satisfies Conee and Feldman's evidentialist account since the doxastic attitude (believing that I am in pain) fits the evidence S has (the awareness of being in pain). So, the following are true of this case:

1. S believes that she is in pain.
2. S is nonconceptually aware of being in pain.

The awareness in condition 2 is explicitly nonconceptual and thus there are no judgments here in the alleged justifying state so we do not seem to have

⁹⁰ Though it is true that Bergmann evaluates their view as an alternative to one that requires awareness, it seems to me that the right way to understand S's 'having evidence' is as including an implicit awareness requirement. This seems to be what their more recent statement of evidentialism is meant to capture. Here they make a distinction between scientific evidence (e.g., that the fingerprints at the scene of a crime have precise characteristics X, Y, and Z) and justifying evidence (e.g., that these fingerprints are Lefty's and it indicates his presence at the crime scene). The belief that Lefty was at the scene of the crime fits the scientific evidence but since the investigator does not "grasp the connection" between the scientific evidence and the belief that Lefty was at the crime scene, he fails to have *evidence* in the sense they are interested in. See Conee and Feldman (2008), p. 84-86.

any possibility of regress. Does Conee and Feldman's evidentialism fall prey to the SPO? I think we can clearly show this to be the case since the satisfaction of the above conditions will not necessarily provide the subject with an awareness of what the belief has going for it. That is, S could be nonconceptually aware of her pain and believe that she is in pain without being aware of the relevance that being in pain has for believing that one is in pain. The reason is again that 1 and 2 above do not *entail* that S is aware of the epistemic relevance of the pain experience to the belief despite the fact that S is aware of this justification-contributor. Indeed, S is aware of the very truthmaker of the belief and this no doubt should play a role in justifying the belief. However, there is no awareness of this belief's being *connected to* the truth. So the claim is that nonconceptual awareness of the experience by itself does not secure epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject.

What if, in order to get out of the dilemma, we said that instead of merely being nonconceptually aware of being in pain, it must *seem* to S that she is in pain? This would be to claim that given it seeming to S that p, S has epistemic assurance of the truth or justification of the belief that p. If this is to be an affirmation of the nondoxastic horn, then the seemings in view must of course be nondoxastic. In a recent article, Jason Rogers and Jonathan Matheson make just this move as a response to Bergmann's dilemma. They say:

...it is readily apparent that [nonconceptual seemings] can make a relevant difference from the subject's perspective—specifically, they can make it the case that, from the subject's perspective, the relevant belief is appropriate to hold. A subject hosting these mental states concerning a particular belief is reasonable (assuming he possesses no justification defeaters) in expecting that belief to be true, and so the belief's truth, from his perspective, is non-accidental...Given that the proposition seems true to him, it is not surprising or accidental, from his perspective, that it is true.⁹¹

For Rogers and Matheson, the seeming state is a nonconceptual inclination to believe that arises from some first order state of direct awareness. The idea is that, from being directly aware of a state of pain, there arises an inclination to believe that one is in pain. This inclination is nondoxastic since one may have the inclination while withholding belief.⁹²

Have Rogers and Matheson blocked the SPO? It *seems* to me that they have not. As we have already seen, one could have an experience of pain and one could believe that one is in pain but remain unaware of the epistemic relevance of the experience to the belief perhaps given some cognitive malfunction. If this is right, then the question is whether a seeming state can necessarily prevent the possibility of a similar disconnect. Does adding the following to our account entail that S is aware of what the belief has going for it?

1. S believes that she is in pain
2. S is nonconceptually aware of being in pain.
3. S has a felt inclination to believe that she is in pain

⁹¹ Rogers and Matheson (2011), p. 61-62 .

⁹² The standard examples are often illusions such as a partially submerged stick seeming bent where one does not believe that it is bent

I don't see any reason to think that adding 3 would *necessarily* make the belief in 1 non-accidental from the perspective of the subject. The reason is again that the satisfaction of 1-3 does not entail S's awareness of what the belief has going for it. One could perhaps have a dramatic cognitive malfunction where one is in pain and has a felt inclination to believe that she is in pain and have no idea what this seeming state has to do with the belief that she is in pain. There is no doubt that this is a case radically different from our typical cognitive experience. However, there is no essential connection between the experience, the seeming state and the belief. One might have the view that the seeming state and the belief have the very same content. Even if this were true, it doesn't solve the problem because minimally one would have to be aware of these sharing the same content to make an epistemic difference. No such awareness is specified in 1-3 above. So, since adding a seeming state does not *necessarily* relate the doxastic and nondoxastic states from the subject's perspective, the view is open to the SPO.

Another way to make this point is that one could add a seeming state to the Norman case and it may still be the case that Norman is completely unaware of what his belief has going for it in an epistemic sense. Suppose that Norman suddenly and inexplicably has the felt inclination to believe that the president is in New York but has no idea about the relevance of this

seeming state to the truth of the president's whereabouts. It is true that Norman may reflect on this strange state of affairs and it may cease to be the case that his belief is accidental in at least one sense. After all, he can now, in a way, point to the seeming state as what is responsible for him having that belief.⁹³ So the belief may be non-accidental in this sense but this seems to only amount to the belief being *causally* non-accidental. But this isn't the sense of a belief's being non-accidental that we are after given the desideratum outlined above. Norman could also have the felt inclination to believe that that his recently bought lottery ticket is the big winner. Its seeming to him that the president is in New York is the result of reliable clairvoyance while, let's say, it seeming to him that his lottery ticket is a winner is the result of wishful thinking. Norman would need some reason for thinking that the seeming state that relates the belief about the president's whereabouts is an epistemically good ground for the belief which will be something the belief about the lottery ticket lacks. But unless he has this, both of these beliefs remain epistemically accidental from his perspective.⁹⁴

So neither the awareness of the truthmaker nor the nondoxastic seeming state secures epistemic assurance from S's perspective. Something more is needed. It is my thesis that in order to solve the Sellarsian dilemma, as I have construed it generally above, one must require not only that one be

⁹³ This is assuming that he is aware of the belief's being caused by the seeming state. If he did not have this awareness, then it wouldn't even be causally non-accidental.

⁹⁴ John Depoe makes a similar argument against Michael Huemer in Depoe (Forthcoming).

aware of a state that is relevant, one must also be aware of the relation of relevance. This would be true, in principle, for any epistemic relation the epistemologist thinks confers epistemic justification. So, if one is convinced that it is a belief's standing in a causal relation to a reliable belief-forming process that confers justification, then in order to achieve epistemic assurance from the perspective of the subject and block the Sellarsian dilemma, one must be aware of this relation. If the epistemologist thinks that an appropriate seeming state confers justification on a belief, then the subject must be aware of whatever the relation is that holds between the seeming state that allegedly confers justification and the belief upon which it confers justification.⁹⁵

I am not intending by the foregoing to be saying that we are aware of these relations. Instead, I am making a conceptual point. If a believing subject were aware of the relation of epistemic relevance, then it would not be possible for the subject to be unaware of what the belief had going for it. The question that we will then need to ask is whether there is an epistemic relation of which we are aware in cognitive experience. On the view that I will defend, the relation of epistemic relevance of which we can be and often are aware is the *relation of fit*. The upper limit of the relation of fit, on my view, is correspondence. However, a judgment can fit a state with something less than correspondence. I will be characterizing the relation of fit as

⁹⁵ As I have argued above, I don't think that there is an epistemic relation that holds between the seeming state and the target belief. This is the unaccomplished task of the epistemologist that thinks seemings can do this work.

correspondence or something near enough. So the relation of fit is a more general relation, of which the relation of correspondence is a species.⁹⁶ The view is, then, it must not only be the case that one's doxastic attitude fits a nondoxastic state, as Conee and Feldman had it, but that one is *aware of the fit* that holds between the doxastic state and the relevant nondoxastic state.

My general contention is that awareness of the relation of epistemic relevance that holds between a judgment and a state⁹⁷ necessarily provides epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective. Given the satisfaction of this condition, it will not be possible to construct an SPO, even with extravagant malfunction, where the subject lacks epistemic assurance.

Now, we must exercise caution here invoking an awareness requirement as the solution to the Sellarsian dilemma since Bergmann's dilemma is focused on those that require awareness. He in particular will be waiting patiently to run his dilemma on whatever sort of awareness we now invoke. It will be absolutely crucial for solving the dilemma that the state of awareness in view is entirely nondoxastic, in the sense that the awareness of the relation is not in virtue of any judgment. This is what we will refer to as *direct awareness*, which, as I have it in mind, is synonymous with what has classically been called *acquaintance*.⁹⁸ Bertrand Russell characterizes acquaintance thusly:

⁹⁶ I will have more to say about the relation of fit in chapter 4.

⁹⁷ We'll primarily be interested in experiential states.

We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths.⁹⁹

The critical point here is that when one is directly aware, there are no judgments of any sort mediating this relation that holds between the subject and the object of awareness. Acquaintance is the sort of awareness we have prior to the formation or the application of concepts. Insofar as infants are aware of the character of their experiences and yet, at a certain very young age, lack all relevant concepts about the character of their experiences, then this awareness is direct awareness.

Requiring a condition of this sort does not result in a regress of justification since we are only positing direct awareness. I take this to be uncontroversial since there is nothing doxastic requiring further justification in the alleged justifying state. It is also important to note that the required awareness is object-level awareness as opposed to meta-awareness. I am not requiring direct awareness of the necessary condition or conditions of justification. To do that would lead to a different sort of regress. If one required awareness of a necessary condition of justification, then this, in effect, would also be a necessary condition. If one must be aware of the relation of epistemic relevance, for example, then one would need to be aware of [being aware of the relation of relevance]. But then one would need to be

⁹⁸ I will at times use 'direct awareness' and 'acquaintance' interchangeably in this project.

⁹⁹ Russell (1959), p. 46.

aware of the satisfaction of this condition as well and the regress is established.¹⁰⁰ Instead, my requirement is for direct awareness of the relation of relevance and no further meta-awareness is needed. So, since there is nothing doxastic that requires further justification constitutive of this justification-contributor and since no meta-conditions are required, the view is, in effect, regress-proof.

What is perhaps more controversial is whether the view is open to the SPO. In fact, Bergmann claims that Richard Fumerton's acquaintance theory,¹⁰¹ which has a requirement of this sort, is indeed SPO-liable. Fumerton requires direct awareness of correspondence. Again, on my view, standing in a relation of correspondence is one way in which a judgment can fit a state, though as I will argue in chapter 4 the relation of fit need not be strict correspondence. In any case, Fumerton's requirement would be a species of what I have in mind with the relation of fit. I will argue (contra Bergmann) that Fumerton's requiring direct awareness of correspondence (or what Fumerton typically calls *acquaintance with correspondence*) necessarily puts one in a positive epistemic position.

On Fumerton's view, one has noninferential justification for the belief that P when one has the thought that P (of which the belief that P is a

¹⁰⁰ This is similar to the argument the early BonJour made against foundationalists where he, in effect, attempted to get the foundationalist to accept an awareness requirement on the analysis of justification itself. However, his claim was much stronger since he thought that one needed to have a justified belief that the conditions of justification were satisfied. This was discussed briefly in Chapter 1. See BonJour (1985), pp. 30-33.

¹⁰¹ It is Richard Fumerton's theory that led me to see the importance of requiring the direct awareness of the epistemically relevant relation.

species) and one is directly aware of “the fact that P, the thought that P, and the relation of correspondence holding between the thought that P and the fact that P.”¹⁰² Let’s treat being directly aware of the correspondence as amounting to what I have characterized generally as direct awareness of fit.¹⁰³

Bergmann makes the following claim against Fumerton’s account:

[A subject] can be directly acquainted with the relation of correspondence holding between his thought that he is being appeared to redly and the fact that he is being appeared to redly *even if he has no idea* that the relation of correspondence holds between these two items (again, this is because nonconceptual awareness is the sort of thing that can occur without the application of *any* concepts).¹⁰⁴

Bergmann’s claim is that one could be directly aware of the correspondence between one’s judgment and the corresponding experience and yet have “no idea” that there is such a correspondence. However, the charge of having “no idea” is a bit unclear. If one must conceive of the object with which one is acquainted in order to have an ‘idea’ with respect to that object, then Bergmann is quite right. But to say that one is thereby oblivious to this object is to beg the question against the acquaintance theorist since the acquaintance theorist thinks that though acquaintance does not involve

¹⁰² Fumerton (1995), p. 75. Fumerton puts it in terms of acquaintance rather than direct awareness but I take it that these are synonymous. Also, he makes clear in the following paragraphs that standing in the appropriate relations of acquaintance is also necessary for noninferential justification.

¹⁰³ On my use of the terminology, the relation of fit comes in degrees (i.e., there can be a more or less fit) and so I think of correspondence as the upper limit of the fitting relation.

¹⁰⁴ Bergmann (2006), p. 30.

concept application, it is the very sort of state that can make a subjective difference (i.e., provide a kind of nonconceptual ‘idea’) about that with which one is acquainted.

However, lest we beg a similar question against Bergmann, let’s motivate the view. Can one be merely acquainted (as in without applying any concepts) with some object and have no idea about (as in be completely oblivious to) that of which one is acquainted? On my view, the answer is no. When one is directly aware of some object, then one *is aware* of that object. It’s redundant, I realize, but the redundancy is largely the point.¹⁰⁵ The state of direct awareness *necessarily* makes a subjective difference. We should note that this is not to claim that direct awareness yields infallible judgments about the object of awareness. It is the much more modest claim that one could not be completely oblivious to an object of direct awareness. Even though one may make a false judgment about the precise character of the object, it doesn’t follow that one is not directly aware of that object. On this view, when one is directly aware of one’s pain there is a determinate character that individuates this state (makes it pain rather than pleasure in a noncomparative sense) there before one’s consciousness. An infant who lacks the requisite conceptual resources is not conceptually aware *that* she is in pain but it is just a mistake to think that she could be oblivious to her

¹⁰⁵ One reason that I prefer the term “direct awareness” over “acquaintance” is that it is very difficult to think of one being directly aware and yet oblivious (as in completely unaware) of some object at the same time. “Acquaintance” is enough of a technical term that people will sometimes make this mistake.

being in pain when she is directly aware of the pain. Just ask any new parent.

So the critical claim is that when one is directly aware of the relation of correspondence (or, more generally, the relation of fit) holding between the belief and the character of the experience, this makes not only a subjective difference but an *epistemic subjective difference*, since one is aware of what the belief has going for it in its relation to the truth. Recall that Bergmann set up the SPO as follows “If the subject holding a belief isn’t *aware* of what that belief has going for it, then she isn’t *aware* of how its status is any different from a stray hunch or an arbitrary conviction” (italics are mine).¹⁰⁶ Notice that he does not require one to have a conceptual idea of what the belief has going for it. Rather he only requires one to have awareness of this fact and this is satisfied by the direct awareness of fit.

Bergmann concludes his objection against Fumerton’s account by saying that the belief that one’s being appeared to redly can “satisfy Fumerton’s requirements even if [one] conceives of his being appeared to redly as no more relevant to [the belief] than is the mild pain in his left knee.”¹⁰⁷ The acquaintance theorist’s response is that we need not *conceive* of the relevance in order for one to have subjective awareness of the relevance. Even if we conceived of one’s being appeared to redly as irrelevant to the truth or justification of the belief, it is still the case that we are aware of what

¹⁰⁶ Bergmann (2006), p. 12.

¹⁰⁷ Bergmann (2006), p. 12.

the belief has going for it when we are aware of its fit. This is all that is needed to block the SPO.

We should note that when we're appeared to redly, we typically get these judgments right. We don't, when we are being appeared to redly, typically judge that there is a mild pain in our left knee. When we experience searing pain, we don't judge ourselves to be experiencing pleasure or that the Eiffel Tower is in Paris. The question is how are we able to make judgments that have any relevance whatsoever with the experience being judged? I will argue that our ability to make relevant judgments is best explained by the fact that we often enjoy direct awareness of the relevance, what I have called the relation of fit.¹⁰⁸ It seems plausible to me that when I am in pain, I won't be making the mistake that I am experiencing pleasure precisely because I am directly aware of the fit that holds between the judgment that I am in pain and the experience of being in pain.

So the claim is that requiring direct awareness of fit secures epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective without leading to regress. To see this, let's amend the above example with the following condition:

1. S believes that she is in pain.
2. S is nonconceptually (i.e., directly) aware of being in pain.
- 3.* S is directly aware of the fit between the belief that she is in pain and the pain.

Again, there is nothing doxastic requiring further justification in 2 or 3*. So, the account is regress-proof. Does the state provide epistemic assurance from

¹⁰⁸ I will argue for this contention in chapter 3.

the subject's perspective in all cases or is it open to the SPO? The claim is that 1-3 do in fact entail that S is aware of the epistemic relevance of the pain experience to the belief. Indeed, one is aware of what the belief has going for it. Namely, one is aware of the belief fitting the relevant nondoxastic state.

There is no analogous possibility of the malfunction that plagued the views above. There is no way that a believing subject could malfunction in such a way that the subject could satisfy the account and yet fail to be aware of what the belief had going for it. As we mentioned above, direct awareness or acquaintance is not mediated by any judgment. It is also not itself propositional, in the sense that acquaintance is not the sort of state that admits of truth or falsehood.¹⁰⁹ Acquaintance can't get it wrong since wrongness and rightness are not predicates that apply. Even if one experienced, say, pleasure rather than pain given some sort of malfunction, one just is, in this case, acquainted with pleasure and not pain. Recall that the task of the foundationalist in the face of the Sellarsian dilemma was to account for how a nondoxastic state could justify a doxastic attitude. Direct awareness of fit splits the horns of the dilemma since it, in effect, relates in an epistemic sense, these otherwise disparate states.

In discussing this solution to the dilemma, I have been primarily referencing the Sellarsian dilemma in its generalized formulation. We are

¹⁰⁹ This is not to say that one couldn't be acquainted with a propositional state. But you still wouldn't, in this case, predicate truth or falsity of the relation of acquaintance itself.

now in a position to see how this solves each of the dilemmas detailed in chapter 1.

2.3.1 Sellars

In response to Sellars' original dilemma, part of the mistake is thinking that only something that is a justified doxastic state can satisfy the normative condition that's essential to knowing. Sellars was right to say that the awareness of the nondoxastic state (the sense datum in this case) is not by itself a knowing and does not entail knowledge. But it is just a mistake to think that the nondoxastic state cannot be justificatorily relevant. When one has this awareness and is directly aware that one's doxastic state fits the nondoxastic state it is quite easy to see how the nondoxastic state is relevant from the perspective of the subject.

In regards to his second more effective dilemma, I reject the thought that one must recognize the authority of an observational report if by 'recognize' this means make a further judgment or inference. If we understand the epistemic authority as what the belief has going for it, then it seems to me that direct awareness of the relation of fit amounts to being aware of the epistemic authority without requiring a further recognitional judgment. If it is right that one can be directly aware of the relation of fit that holds between the judgment that, say, this is green and the experience of greenness, then one is aware of this report's epistemic authority without needing to judgmentally recognize the authority.

2.3.2 BonJour

The answer to BonJour is similar. BonJour argues that in order for an experience to play a justificatory role, one must grasp or apprehend the experience where this state of grasping or apprehension looks to be something judgmental. This judgment would require further justification. I again want to agree that raw sensation cannot, all by itself, justify any judgments. However, if one is having an experience of a certain sort and one is directly aware of the fit that holds between this experience and a judgment, then the believing subject would possess epistemic assurance with respect to this judgment, which again does not lead to regress.

2.3.3 Bergmann

Bergmann's dilemma is different from BonJour's and Sellars' original dilemma since it only applies to a view that invokes an awareness requirement. However, since I am using an awareness requirement to solve the dilemma in all of its forms, then the answer is again largely the same. Bergmann thinks that some conceptual awareness of the epistemic relevance of the justification contributor is required in order to possess subjective assurance sufficient to block the SPO. I think this is mistaken since direct awareness of fit is, in effect, itself a justification contributor and there is no need to conceive of this relation to be aware of what the relevant belief has going for it.

2.4 Toward a Theory of Noninferential Justification

There seems to be a thought common to our considered formulations of the Sellarsian dilemma to which I am sympathetic. Recall that Sellars thought that awareness of the given, or what we might call the intrinsic character of an experience cannot, all by itself, justify one's belief, even when the belief is about the character of the experience. The thought is that, minimally, one would need to represent the character of the experience as being some way or other. Sellars seemed to think that one must conceive of, say, pain *as pain*, in order for the pain state to stand in a justificatory relation. On my view, before one can form any justified beliefs about the external world on the basis of experience (say, the belief that the pain I am experiencing is caused by being pricked by a pin), one *does* need to apply concepts to the raw content of experience. This conceptualization requires justification but, I will argue, may be justified noninferentially and the regress of justification ends with it. These are the very sorts of judgments of which we can be aware of their standing in a relation of fit to experiential states.¹¹⁰

It will prove useful to have a typical sort of case before us. Let's imagine that a subject, Mike, is having a visual experience of a sort that we typically have when we believe that there is a tree before us. Let's call the

¹¹⁰ Most of my examples will reference pain (or pleasure) or visual sensation. The reason for this is that these make better examples of experiential states, though I think everything that is said for these can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, for cognitive experience involving the other sense modalities.

experience E_T , where we will think of E_T as the purely nondoxastic element of the experience of which Mike is directly aware.¹¹¹ Let's also suppose that Mike believes that there is an (external world) tree before him. Call this belief B_T . Does E_T justify B_T , for Mike? The idea that E_T justifies B_T straightaway would be a mistake since B_T is a belief about a physical object (as opposed to a belief about experience) and if, as we saw above, the awareness of experience cannot, by itself, justify beliefs about the experience, it seems even more dubious that it could, by itself, justify beliefs about physical objects. So this account will easily fall prey to the SPO.

I argued that, in order to block the SPO, one must be directly aware of the justification conferring relation that holds between the nondoxastic state and the relevant doxastic state. This was intended as a necessary condition for noninferential justification. So if we are to avoid the Sellarsian dilemma and we think that B_T is justified on the basis of E_T , then we would have to be directly aware of the relation that holds between B_T and E_T . However, I'm not too optimistic that we can be directly aware of any such relation since it is probably too complex to be an object of direct awareness. This need for direct awareness of an epistemic relation drastically constrains the candidates of relations that can provide the subject epistemic assurance.¹¹²

¹¹¹ It is important to note that Mike is directly aware of E_T since some acquaintance theorists think that there can be features of one's experience of which one is unaware. Unless one is in a sound proof room, there is almost always some ambient noise within earshot (e.g., the buzzing of a light or a computer). When one is paying no attention to the ambient noise, one might think of this as a situation of being completely unaware of the noise even though one is still, in some sense, experiencing the noise.

There are plenty of relations that epistemologists have identified that may hold between B_T and E_T that appear to be epistemic relations.¹¹³ However, these are not relations of which we are directly aware in ordinary cognitive experience. What is clear is that B_T , being a belief about the external world, does not stand in a relation of fit or correspondence to E_T . B_T corresponds to a state of affairs in which there exists the relevant external world fact that makes this belief true. Again, there is little doubt that the experience plays a role in justifying a belief such as this, but it cannot be by virtue of correspondence or fit, as I am using these terms.

The thought is that, in order for a belief like B_T to be justified for Mike, there must be some conceptualization of E_T . But to conceive of E_T brings in something doxastic, in that a conceptual judgment is made. Let's call this conceptual judgment C_T , where C_T should be understood as the doxastic element constitutive of the conceptualization of the visual experience. Being doxastic, C_T is, itself, in need of justification. So, although we have, in a sense, regressed from B_T to C_T , it is my contention that the regress terminates with C_T . This is because, unlike B_T , C_T is the very sort of doxastic state for which the relation of fit holds between it and E_T . On my view, what is basic in the structure of empirical justification, as it relates to perception,

¹¹² I suspect that this difficulty is why there has been a pervasive rejection of the desideratum of epistemic assurance despite having to live with the SPO.

¹¹³ I am thinking here of, for example, the relation of being produced by a reliable belief forming process. Perhaps B_T is a reliably produced belief. This arguably an epistemic relation since beliefs so formed will tend to be true beliefs. However, no one thinks that we are directly aware of this relation, which is why it is externalists who extol the virtues of reliability and not internalists.

is the application of concepts to the character of our perceptual experience when we are directly aware of the fit that holds between the concept and the character of the experience.

I find very plausible the idea that when I am in pain and I conceive of the state as pain, I am quite aware of the fit that holds between this judgment and this state. We do not typically deliberate and intellectually labor in any way over the making of the judgment. These judgments are, as I will say below, ultra-mundane. However, it at least seems possible that we could deliberate about this sort of thing and how I would characterize what it is we would be “looking for” is whether this judgment stands in a relation of fit. If we were asked why we formed that judgment, a perfectly acceptable answer would be to “point to” the relation of fit. If we were unaware of the fit, then one might wonder why we formed that belief instead of something quite different. We seem to be quite good at making sense of our experiences precisely because we are aware of the fit that holds between these judgments and the relevant experiences.

Let’s say a little more about these judgments. On my view, the act of conceptualization is when a subject represents in thought the character of phenomenal experience being some way or other. It seems to me that this is how we make sense of our experience and the hope is that this may provide the basis for inferring further beliefs about the world. This is what I think BonJour had in mind with grasping or apprehending the experience and

perhaps what Bergmann sometimes refers to as conceptual awareness.¹¹⁴ So, in a way, I concede that experience must be grasped in the sense of representing its character before our minds in order to form beliefs on the basis of the experience. However, it is the conceptual grasping or becoming conceptually aware that I locate as foundational.

So if B_T is about a state of affairs in the external world, what is C_T about? C_T is a conceptual judgment about what I have called the raw character of the experience. Let's say that in the having of E_T the property of greenness is exemplified.¹¹⁵ If by this we mean the property instantiated in the experience (the phenomenal property), then this property is different from the greenness of, say, the (external world) tree leaf.¹¹⁶ The reason to think that there is a distinction here is that we can change the property as experienced without changing anything about the tree leaf itself. That is, one could put on colored glasses or change the lighting conditions in some way and the phenomenal property will be different. However the (nonrelational) properties of the tree haven't changed at all. Moreover, it seems at least

¹¹⁴ We should note that conceptual awareness per se does not constitute Bergmann's "strong awareness." Strong awareness is a particular species of conceptual awareness. It is conceiving of the justifier as epistemically relevant to a belief. I am here only borrowing Bergmann's term since it seems to capture what I am attempting to identify as a judgment that may be foundationally justified.

¹¹⁵ I don't mean to suggest here that there is some entity, the experience, that has the property of phenomenal green. One might say that, in the experience, phenomenal greenness is exemplified by the conscious subject herself.

¹¹⁶ One might hold to the view that since color is a so-called secondary quality, there is no property of greenness had by the tree leaf. However, the point is that, whatever one's view is here, there is some property exemplified in the experience that is not had by the tree alone. Whatever this external world property is, it is different from the property of phenomenal green.

possible that one's visual faculties could have been different and the property instantiated in the experience may be phenomenal blue rather than phenomenal green when seeing a tree leaf. Again, this could be so without the tree leaf's being any different. The greenness instantiated in the experience is a phenomenal property, which is characterized and individuated by what it is like to experience it. The thought is that, in experience, we are directly aware of the exemplification of phenomenal properties that constitute the character of the experience. C_T is a judgment about this phenomenal character.

We could, at this point, get embroiled pretty quickly in controversial issues in the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of perception that are tangential to the focus of this project. For example, the mere mention of phenomenal properties will cause some readers to cringe. However, I wish to remain neutral on some of the finer points of these deeply metaphysical issues, so far as this is possible. There's no doubt that I will along the way be drawing some metaphysical lines in the sand. However, the epistemology of what I have in mind may not turn on, for example, whether or not phenomenal properties are reducible to purely physical properties.¹¹⁷ It also does not turn on whether one thinks that the sense datum theory or the adverbial theory is the correct metaphysics in regards to perception. If one's

¹¹⁷ It is true that there are some materialist views in the philosophy of mind that deny the existence of anything phenomenal and think that we should (or will one day be able to) eliminate this category from our ontology. The eliminativist may not be a fan of the view I am here defending but I think that this speaks to the radical nature of eliminativist views.

view can countenance the existence of properties exemplified in the experience of which we are aware, then I think we can get the epistemological account off the ground.

What I take to be plausible and rather minimal in its undertaking is that, in experience, there is at least a component of the state that is nondoxastic. I will refer to this component as *sensation* and will sometimes qualify it as the *raw sensation* to emphasize its being nondoxastic. This is not to say that experience cannot be described as also having a doxastic or conceptual component to it. However, this fuller understanding of experience includes judgments and one might think that these often occur very subtly. I will refer to this fuller understanding of experience as *cognitive experience*, since it includes both the sensation and a cognitive or judgmental element. The thought is that sensations come to us with a certain phenomenal character. My claim is that we represent the character of the raw sensation in thought, in most cases, in a virtual instant without deliberation. This is the cognitive experience and it is this that I would like to suggest is foundational. A plausible way to characterize cognitive experience is that when one has a sensation of which one is directly aware, one may apply concepts to the sensation state and thereby represent it in thought *as* being some way or other. The conceptual judgments are noninferentially justified insofar as one is directly aware of their fitting the relevant phenomenal state. Applying this to the case above, Mike possesses the relevant concept that

stands in a relation of fit to the character of his experience and if Mike is directly aware of this fit that holds between his conceptual judgment and the character of his experience, the application of this concept, C_T , is noninferentially justified for Mike.

CHAPTER 3: DIRECT AWARENESS

Our direct awareness of our own existence and of our thoughts provides us with the primary truths a posteriori, the primary truths of fact...[They can be called “immediate”] because there is no mediation between the understanding and its objects. (Leibniz, *New Essays Concerning Human Understanding*, Book IV, Ch. 9)

Internalists typically require that the believing subject be aware of some justification-contributing state of affairs. I have claimed that crucial to solving the Sellarsian dilemma is that the awareness constitutive of the state of noninferential justification be of the direct sort. I will now say more about this critical relation and its epistemic significance. I will do this by, first, tracing some of the literature on direct awareness and acquaintance (much of it was concerned with “knowledge by acquaintance”) and attempt to improve on what has been said in the past in defense of the relation. I will then consider the so-called “problem of the speckled hen” as a powerful objection against acquaintance theories of justification and argue that though the objection helps clarify what one should say about acquaintance, the problem it raises can be solved. This is to achieve the further aim of saying that direct awareness, in a general sense, and the direct awareness of fit, in particular, is plausibly a necessary component of rational cognition.

3.1 Difficulties in Defining Acquaintance

Acquaintance theorists¹¹⁸ play with a certain handicap. Given the nature of what has classically been called acquaintance, it is very difficult to say much about it. It is easy enough to say what being directly aware of an object is not (e.g., it is not conceptual, it is not judgmental, etc.). However, to give a positive characterization that illuminates the notion is, to say the least, elusive. Indeed acquaintance theorists have held that the relation of direct awareness does not admit of further reductive analysis and, moreover, it cannot be subsumed under a more general genus.¹¹⁹ However, though this presents a challenge in offering a satisfying account, one may think that it is important to have *sui generis* notions in one's overall view. The reason is that if every concept gave way to a further reductive analysis, then we would be facing a different sort of regress worry. If we never hit on an irreducible and unanalyzable concept, then an analysis could never get off the ground. There would always be some further analysis needed. Instead, the claim is that at a certain level, analysis must stop. The thought is that there must be fundamental "logical atoms" upon which all the rest of what we understand depends.¹²⁰ So direct awareness is one of the fundamental logical atoms. It

¹¹⁸ An acquaintance theorist is any one that emphasizes a direct (i.e., without the mediation of judgments) confrontation with reality as crucial to noninferential justification.

¹¹⁹ See Fumerton (1995), pp. 76ff. Fumerton says this explicitly but it is, in a way, implied by most (if not all) other acquaintance theorists since, to my knowledge, there are no attempts at any kind of reductive analysis of the relation of acquaintance.

¹²⁰ See Fumerton (2002), p. 36.

is a simple two term relation the mind stands in to “objects”¹²¹ and there is nothing else like it.

Despite these formal difficulties, I will argue that it is a mistake to think that nothing can be said in favor of acquaintance relations. Most of what must be said, in terms of a characterization, is metaphorical. Consider: “acquaintance exists when we hold some object directly before the mind.” This does describe, perhaps in some loose sense, what it is to stand in a relation of acquaintance to something but it obviously should not be taken too literally (i.e., we don’t literally “hold” objects of acquaintance, there is not a literal before, as in spatially before, when we say “before the mind,” etc.).

Another strategy in explaining acquaintance has been to invite one to consider various facts with which, it is claimed, one is acquainted and hope that one “finds” this relation in one’s experience. So we can point out the relation a newborn infant stands in to the experience of pain, or redness, or much more complex entities of experience, all of which the infant lacks any concepts for. Insofar as the infant is aware of these objects and the infant lacks the requisite concepts, it looks like the infant is directly aware. Mature cognitive agents typically possess more or less general concepts¹²² for much of what we experience; however, it seems possible to imagine being aware of the

¹²¹ “Objects” should be taken here in the most neutral of senses. It is merely the objects of acquaintance, which could be physical objects or mental objects, (i.e., sense data) or it could mean properties (F-ness) or facts (as in x being F). There is of course considerable amount of disagreement as to what are the objects of acquaintance.

¹²² We may not possess the concept for a particular shade of red but most adults possess the concept of red or maybe even something more determinate like crimson.

raw sensation of, say, pain or redness prior to making any judgments.¹²³

There is also the situation where one is so engrossed in some thought that one may not *notice* (as in form judgments about) something of which one is aware.¹²⁴ The thought here is that one is aware but has made no judgments in virtue of which one is aware. The dialectical hope is that through ostending the notion one does plausibly pick out a feature of cognitive experience. It is something of an understatement to say that this has proven unsatisfying for some. For it is one thing to concede there plausibly being some sense in which infants and perhaps adults stand in a relation of direct awareness and it is another thing to think that it can play a crucial role in a theory of justification. However, this is the handicap with which the acquaintance theorist plays.

We should also briefly note that, in the history of the debate about acquaintance, there has been no shortage of disputes that seem to turn on an inconsistent use of the terminology. In what follows, I will use synonymously and interchangeably the terms “direct awareness” and “acquaintance.” I will never use either of these terms to mean awareness that is mediated by judgments. Though I think of these as synonyms and will employ both terms,

¹²³ Following H.H. Price, I will argue below that it is not only possible but indeed necessary that one be directly aware of pain in order that I make a judgment *about* the pain.

¹²⁴ It also strikes a lot of people as being possible that one could be so engrossed in thought that one is unaware of something that is right there before one. This might be true too but sometimes it seems that we are not paying attention but it is clear enough that we have been aware of some of what has been before us. I am thinking of cases such as when one is walking down a street engrossed in thought but avoiding walking into light poles or buildings. There seems to be some awareness here, though one is not making any judgments.

I prefer (in most cases) the term “direct awareness” over “acquaintance” as it strikes me as more intuitive and less of a pure philosophical term of art. “Acquaintance” will be used at times since it is the historical term and is preferable in cases when the emphasis is on the state being nonconceptual and nonpropositional. It is awkward grammatically to make acquaintance a propositional attitude (i.e., “acquainted that p”) whereas the term “awareness” has both a propositional (i.e., “awareness that p”) and nonpropositional form (i.e., “awareness of p”). The locution “awareness that p” will never, for me, refer to direct awareness. One problem with “acquaintance” is that it is also sometimes asserted that one could be acquainted with x while being unaware of x. I think that this is a mistake (and probably a contradiction). On my use of the terminology, one cannot be acquainted with x or directly aware of x and be oblivious to x. Or, thinking of facts as the objects of acquaintance, one cannot be acquainted with x being F and be oblivious to x being F.

3.2 Acquaintance and the Knowledge Thereof

Arguably, most philosophers in the history of philosophy prior to the 19th and 20th century have assumed that there is such a thing as the relation of acquaintance, though they have differed concerning what it is with which we are acquainted.¹²⁵ Many philosophers have questioned whether we are acquainted with physical objects rather than our “ideas” (in the modern

¹²⁵ Even Kant I don’t think denied acquaintance. Even if our mind structures our experiences, one might still think that one is acquainted with this now structured thing.

sense, which included the ideas of perception) or sense data. However, if one thought that it is, say, our ideas that are the objects of awareness, it seemed to be assumed that we have a direct awareness of our ideas. In more recent times, there have been those who have rejected the notion that, in experience, we stand in a relation of acquaintance and argued that all awareness in some way crucially involves concept application or judgments of some sort. I think that, as we will discuss below, there are good reasons to reject this view.

Historically, a discussion of the relation of acquaintance is typically situated in a discussion of there being different notions of “knowledge.” The relevant distinction is typically associated with Bertrand Russell, though he largely borrowed the terms (and the distinction, or at least something like it) from others. Most commentators think that Russell’s distinction was taken from William James. In the *Principles of Psychology*, James says:

There are two kinds of knowledge broadly and practically distinguishable: we may call them respectively knowledge of acquaintance and knowledge-about... I am acquainted with many people and things, which I know very little about, except their presence in the places where I have met them. I know the color blue when I see it, and the flavor of a pear when I taste it; I know an inch when I move my finger through it; a second of time, when I feel it pass; an effort of attention when I make it; a difference between two things when I notice it; but about the inner nature of these facts or what makes them what they are, I can say nothing at all. I cannot impart acquaintance with them to any one who has not already made it himself. I cannot describe them, make a blind man guess what blue is like, define to a child a syllogism, or tell a philosopher in just what respect distance is just what it is, and differs from other forms of relation. At most, I can say to my friends, Go to certain places and act in certain ways, and these objects will probably come.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ James (1890), p. 221. Russell also borrowed from Meinong. See Milkov (2001).

The distinction made by James was between “knowledge of acquaintance” and “knowledge about.” Russell of course changed the preposition to ‘by’ in calling it *knowledge by acquaintance*, and since he was interested in giving his theory of descriptions, he calls “knowledge about” *knowledge by description*.¹²⁷

It was about a century ago that Russell introduced his distinction between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description. The distinction seems *prima facie* intuitive, but it has caused more than a little confusion concerning what is being distinguished. One way of understanding the distinction is between firsthand knowledge, where the knowledge is due to personal experience of someone or thing (knowledge by acquaintance), and knowledge gained secondhand (knowledge by description). One might think that there are two ways to know Bob Dylan. One could perhaps be personally acquainted with him, as his friends and family members are, or one could know descriptive facts about Dylan. Or another sort of example is the National Archives conservators *know* the document of the original U.S. Constitution in a way that I do not. I have never personally handled or even seen the original document of the U.S. Constitution, though I do know a few things about it. However, my knowing about the U.S. Constitution is not

¹²⁷ As we will discuss below, this may be a change of some importance. There is an objection to theories of acquaintance that acquaintance by itself is not knowledge. The phrasing of knowledge *by* acquaintance permits the understanding that acquaintance is not all by itself knowledge but it underlies and is a fundamental component of a basic sort of knowledge; knowledge that constitutes the foundation of the rest of our knowledge all of which is known by inference (or by description).

from any firsthand “acquaintance” with the document. It is only secondhand knowledge by description.

The danger here is that though the distinction understood this way is to some degree intuitive, it will prove to be too imprecise for figuring into a theory of noninferential justification. In other words, there might be a loose sense in which one can stand in relation of acquaintance to, say, a person or a thing but it proves to be very difficult to say what this amounts to. This is not the way that Russell thought of these matters and it is not the distinction that will be important to us here. The distinction that Russell makes figures centrally into his epistemology, since he thought that knowledge by acquaintance was the ultimate ground of knowledge by description.

In figuring out what Russell had in mind by this distinction what complicates things is that he makes more than one distinction with respect to issues of acquaintance, description and the knowledge thereof. When Russell introduces his distinction in the *Problems of Philosophy*, it comes in the context of arguing against a component of Berkeleyan idealism. Russell took the Berkeleyan to be asserting the claim that “we cannot know that anything exists which we do not know.”¹²⁸ Though this might look to be something of an analytic truth, Russell argues that there is an equivocation on the word “know”. In the first instance, know is used here to refer to what Russell called *knowledge of truths* and, in the latter instance, know is used to refer to

¹²⁸ Russell (1959), p. 43. Of course, Berkeley himself never makes this assertion. The thesis is at least reminiscent of Berkeley’s so-called “Master Argument.” However, it seems to me that Berkeley’s argument is not reducible to this overly terse statement.

what he called *knowledge of things*. Knowledge of things for Russell was, in its broadest sense, when we stand in a relation of awareness to an object itself. A specific sense of knowledge of things is our awareness of sense data, which he terms *acquaintance*. Characteristic of an acquaintance theorist, Russell doesn't say all that much about what acquaintance is meant to amount to. In one place, he says:

We shall say that we have *acquaintance* with anything of which we are directly aware, without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths.¹²⁹

In another place, Russell says that he is acquainted with an object “when I have a direct cognitive relation to an object, i.e. when I am directly aware of the object itself.”¹³⁰ He is careful to point out that “cognitive relation” should not be thought of as involving any judgment.¹³¹ The object or fact is there before one's consciousness. One might say that the object of awareness is transparent, qua the fact of the matter, to the subject.

The contrast between knowledge of things and knowledge of truths is that an object or thing, in this sense, itself is not a truth in that it is not a

¹²⁹ Russell (1959), p. 46.

¹³⁰ Russell (1911), p. 108. By “cognitive relation,” Russell does not mean that there is anything with a truth value in view. He says, “When I speak of a cognitive relation here, I do not mean the sort of relation which constitutes judgment, but the sort which constitutes presentation.” One might well question whether the adjective cognitive is used appropriately to refer to a relation where the relation is not mediated by a judgment or anything that is a bearer of truth value.

¹³¹ One could of course stand in a relation of acquaintance to a judgment but the relation itself in being acquainted with a judgment would not be mediated by a further judgment.

truthbearer.¹³² Things themselves are neither true nor false. They are merely chunks of reality, as it were. A rock is a thing and we don't say of it that it (the rock itself not the thought of or some description of the rock) is either true or false. A sense datum, in Russell's sense, is also a thing and the sense datum itself is neither true nor false. Propositions (or statements or beliefs), on the other hand, are truthbearers; they are either true or false. So, then knowledge of truths is knowledge wherein that which is known is a truth. Russell says:

It is applicable to the sort of knowledge which is opposed to error, the sense in which what we know is *true*, the sense which applies to our beliefs and convictions, i.e., to what are called *judgements*. In this sense of the word we know *that* something is the case. This sort of knowledge may be described as knowledge of *truths*.¹³³

This is what is referred to in contemporary terms as “propositional knowledge.” In contemporary epistemology, we typically concern ourselves with propositional knowledge though knowledge of things, especially acquaintance, may figure into an analysis of knowledge or justification as a more fundamental element of an overall epistemological theory.¹³⁴

¹³² One might think of propositions or beliefs as things in a broad sense. If this is right, then we may need to qualify the “things” as nonpropositional things.

¹³³ Russell (1959), p. 44.

¹³⁴ It proves to create a great deal of controversy to use the term “knowledge” here to describe the state of knowing a thing (as opposed to knowing a truth), even when stipulating the different senses being used. The ensuing debate about Russell's distinction sometimes centered (needlessly, in my opinion) on what I take to be a terminological issue. It seems to me that knowledge of things is better termed as “awareness of things,” where acquaintance is direct awareness and mediated awareness would be indirect. Russell calls this “knowledge of things by description.”

So Russell asserts that the Berkeleyan idealist argument should be read as saying: since I do not know certain objects (in the acquaintance sense), then I cannot know (in a descriptive sense) that those object exists.¹³⁵ However, Russell thinks that this consequence does not follow from the premise so long as we distinguish these two different senses of “know”. He says, “I have not the honour to be acquainted with the Emperor of China, but I truly judge that he exists.”¹³⁶ Russell admits that acquaintance with something is necessary for coming to know a truth. He says:

What happens, in cases where I have true judgement without acquaintance, is that the thing is known to me by description, and that, in virtue of some general principle, the existence of a thing answering to this description can be inferred from the existence of something with which I am acquainted.¹³⁷

So, for Russell, we get ourselves knowledge by description on the basis of standing in a relation of acquaintance, but it need not be acquaintance with the truthmaker of the descriptive knowledge.

Acquaintance itself, on the other hand, is entirely unmediated by anything, especially anything conceptual or judgmental. It is a fundamental two term relation. It is perhaps the most fundamental of relations of cognitive experience in that one might think that this is the very nexus of mind and world. On my view, the relata of this relation are one’s self (or

¹³⁵ We should note that Berkeley did of course think that God existed even though Berkeley did not think that he stood in a relation of acquaintance with God.

¹³⁶ Russell (1959), p. 44.

¹³⁷ Russell (1959), p. 45.

mind or consciousness) and a fact. I will be adopting Fumerton's notion of a fact. He defines it this way:

A fact is a thing's or things' exemplifying a property or properties, where "property" is used to pick out both monadic properties and those relations that tie particulars together in relational states of affairs.¹³⁸

So something's exemplifying a property or properties or, crudely put, a thing being thus and so, is directly present to one's mind.

What are the facts of which we are directly aware? For Russell, the objects of acquaintance included sense data, the content of memorial states, introspection (this would be acquaintance with acquaintance), one's self (perhaps), and universals. We should also note that we stand in a relation of direct awareness to our thoughts in general and beliefs or judgments in particular. This is not to say that when one forms a belief one is always directly aware of one's forming the belief. The point here is that a thought or a belief is among the candidates for being an object of direct awareness. It is not as if we have to judge that we are having a thought, in most cases, in order to be aware of our thought. We can be directly aware of our thoughts and judgments. We should again stress that even though a thought is a conceptual thing, being directly aware of a thought does not mean that the relation of direct awareness itself is conceptual in the sense of being mediated by a judgment. Properly speaking, it is the fact that one has a particular thought of which one is directly aware.

¹³⁸ Richard Fumerton (2010), p. 92.

We are now in a position to make the distinction. The distinguishing mark between knowledge by acquaintance and knowledge by description is that in knowledge by acquaintance the truthmaker figures into one's consciousness whereas with knowledge by description something other than the truthmaker figures into the justification of the belief.¹³⁹ On my view, knowledge by acquaintance is best thought of as the propositional knowledge that is had in virtue of being acquainted with a fact. So, for me, it is factual knowledge that is justified at least in part on the basis of standing in a relation or relations of acquaintance. The acquaintance itself is not judgmental though the knowledge had in virtue of standing in a relation of acquaintance does include a judgment. For empirical knowledge and justification, it will be the acquaintance with the facts of experience that figure into the noninferential states of justification. Knowledge by description, on the other hand, is knowledge whose justification is ultimately derived from the knowledge by acquaintance.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ The fact that something other than the truthmaker justifies the belief is one reason why it is difficult to make sense of knowledge by description (i.e., inferential knowledge). For example, we have to make sense of how a judgment about the external world could be justified, at least on some level, on the basis of experience. Though we are aware of the experience, the experience itself will not be the truthmaker of a belief about the external world.

¹⁴⁰ We seem to end up here with the distinction between noninferential and inferential knowledge. On a broadly foundationalist picture, the view will be that knowledge by acquaintance is foundational and is the ultimate ground of knowledge by description.

3.3 Objections to Acquaintance

Acquaintance is not without its problems. Mark Sainsbury has recommended “whenever possible, attempt to defend Russell’s doctrines independently of the principle of acquaintance.”¹⁴¹ There are at least two reasons that Russell’s notion of acquaintance was rejected in the history of the debate concerning acquaintance. The first one is that many philosophers have thought that when one stands in a relation of acquaintance that this alone constitutes knowledge. Some participants in the debate have thought it is a mistake to think that acquaintance alone constitutes knowledge. In fact, a surprising amount of the discussion over the past century has been focused on whether standing in a relation of acquaintance by itself constitutes knowledge or at least a kind of knowledge.

This difficulty arises since Russell at some points speaks of acquaintance as a mere relation that the mind stands in to objects that is not itself constituted by concepts or judgments. At other points, he talks as if standing in the relation is meant to be a species of knowing. After all, he calls acquaintance *knowledge* of things. In a 1919 Aristotelian Society Symposium that dealt with the question “Is There ‘Knowledge by Acquaintance’?,” C.D. Broad addressed the ambiguities related to acquaintance by saying:

The proposed subject of our Symposium contains a ‘fallacy of many questions’... (A) Is there such a thing as acquaintance? (B) If so, is acquaintance itself knowledge? (C) What is knowledge *by*

¹⁴¹ Sainsbury (1979), p. 32.

acquaintance, and does it exist? This question clearly splits into two: (1) If acquaintance be not knowledge is there a kind of knowledge specially related to it (and, if so, how?), such that it may be called knowledge *by* acquaintance? And (2) If acquaintance be knowledge is it the same as knowledge by acquaintance, or is the latter another kind of knowledge related in some peculiar way to the knowledge which is acquaintance?¹⁴²

Broad thought that to assume that if there is such thing as acquaintance with some objects that this constitutes knowledge, in answer to (B), leads to a great deal of confusion. Broad's answer to (B) is in the negative. He says,

This seems to me mainly a verbal question. Acquaintance, so far as I can see, differs from judgment. And the most usual and important meaning of knowledge is true judgment. If I am right, acquaintance is not knowledge in this sense. It may be called knowledge in so far as it immediately gives rise to the ground for judgments which do constitute knowledge. But here we are speaking figuratively; this only makes acquaintance knowledge in the sense in which we can say that 'the blood is the life'...if you call it knowledge, you are speaking in metaphors or using knowledge in an unusual sense.¹⁴³

That "the blood is the life" is obviously figurative in the sense that blood is necessary for life. So acquaintance may be necessary for knowledge but it would be a mistake to think that it thereby is knowledge.

In addressing Broad's contention many years later, Paul Hayner argues that it is only by, what he calls, an act of "arbitrary linguistic fiat" that Broad is able to say that standing in a relation of acquaintance is not itself knowledge. Hayner argues that referring to mere acquaintance as knowledge is to be found in such authorities as Plato, Aristotle, and

¹⁴² Broad (1919), p. 206.

¹⁴³ Broad (1919), pp. 214-215.

Spinoza.¹⁴⁴ So rather than running contrary to the ordinary notion of 'knowledge,' Hayner says:

...when the matter is viewed historically, it is quite plainly false that "true judgment" is either the usual or the important meaning assigned to knowledge. It is *one* meaning, to be sure, recognized by Aristotle and many others down to the present time. But more often than otherwise, I would claim, it has been knowledge by acquaintance which has been recognized by philosophers as the basic kind of knowledge.¹⁴⁵

Hayner recognizes that if this is taken as merely an appeal to authority, then the argument is a relatively weak one. However, the thesis that he is attempting to counter is the notion that, in its ordinary usage, the term 'knowledge' implies judgment. It seems to me, though, that nothing that he says here precludes the possibility that Plato, et al. (including perhaps Russell himself), are, at times, using the term in a less than precise way. Broad's point, I take it, is that when we get precise on just what we are saying, then it is either a loosely figurative use or it is a different sense of the term from knowledge in a judgmental sense. It seems to me that even if Hayner was right about Plato and Aristotle, thinking of mere nonconceptual awareness as knowledge has, in contemporary times, fallen out of favor as the discussion centers almost exclusively on propositional knowledge and my guess is that Hayner's attempt to stem that tide failed.

In any case, Hayner himself recognizes that this is a different sense of knowledge from propositional knowledge. Russell is perfectly explicit that he

¹⁴⁴ See Hayner (1969), pp. 426-429.

¹⁴⁵ Hayner (1969), pp. 428-429.

did not think of this relation as one that “constitutes judgment.”¹⁴⁶ As was mentioned above, the very reason that Russell introduced the distinction was to distinguish two senses of the term knowledge. It is not clear whether Russell meant that mere acquaintance is itself knowledge but even if he did mean this he didn’t think that it is propositional knowledge since the relation itself is not constituted by anything propositional. So far more important than figuring out what the ordinary usage of the term is, we should be clear and this aim is not served by using the same term for both mere awareness and propositional knowledge. In order to keep the notions distinct, we will go along with contemporary practice in reserving the term ‘knowledge’ for propositional knowledge and acquaintance as a way of being nonconceptually aware.

The second way that acquaintance has been called into question is, in a way, related to the first though I think it is a more serious charge. Here the claim is that Russell in referring to acquaintance was equivocating on a highly intuitive and perhaps obvious feature of cognitive experience and a much more theory-laden one. The idea is that he seemed to think that if one accepted the highly intuitive notion, then these more controversial notions had been established.

Of course, not everyone would agree that acquaintance is a highly intuitive notion. At one point in the 1919 symposium, G. Dawes Hicks says “whether there is or is not ‘acquaintance’ of this sort with sense data, or any

¹⁴⁶ Russell (1911), p. 108. See also Hayner (1969), p. 424.

other entities, the fact, if fact it be, is not, at any rate, so self-evident as to be beyond the range of controversy.”¹⁴⁷ In response to Hicks and in defense of the notion of knowledge by acquaintance, G.E. Moore argued that philosophers who are critical or who reject the notion are not rejecting acquaintance but are rejecting some part of Russell’s theoretical uses of acquaintance.

Moore contended that Hicks’ criticisms of knowledge by acquaintance were similar to those who criticize and reject sense data. Philosophers have referred to “sense data” in many different ways, the characterizations of which are all subject to considerable controversy. However, to reject a characterization of sense data, Moore thought, shouldn’t be conflated with rejecting the existence of sense data. After Moore identifies two controversial tenets of Russell’s characterization of sense data as being mind-independent and not identical with the surface features of a physical object, he says:

And some people seem to think that if the things which he has called “sense-data” have not got both these characteristics (and perhaps others) which he has supposed them to have, then the things in question are *not* “sense data” in the sense in which he has used the term; and hence it is really doubtful whether there are any such things as he has meant by “sense-data.”¹⁴⁸

So there is this theory-laden notion of sense data as perhaps mind-independent things that exemplify properties such as greenness and sourness that carry significant ontological commitment. One may quite legitimately

¹⁴⁷ Dawes (1919), p. 162.

¹⁴⁸ Moore (1919), p. 181.

reject this characterization. However, Moore thinks that no one in their right mind should reject the existence of sense data, thought of as that which occurs in sense experience. Returning to the notion of acquaintance, the analogy is meant to be that though there are controversial characterizations of acquaintance, the fact that there is acquaintance in some sense or other is an obvious constituent of our cognitive experience.

In a 1949 Aristotelian Society symposium that had as its subject matter a reprisal of the very same question as the 1919 symposium, H.L.A. Hart seems to grant Moore's analogy but charges that Russell trades on this somewhat obvious notion of acquaintance and smuggles in his controversial characterizations. Hart identifies four theses which Russell endorsed in his characterization of direct acquaintance.

- (A) We are sometimes directly aware of something without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths.
- (B) We are immediately conscious when we are seeing and touching a table of its colour shape hardness and smoothness.
- (C) So far as concerns knowledge of the colour itself we know the colour perfectly and completely when we see it.
- (D) The sense-data which make up the appearance of my table are immediately known to me just as they are.¹⁴⁹

These are certainly characterizations and are not such that we can assume the truth of each one. Hart claims:

Russell gives no reasons for saying that these propositions (A)-(D) are true but coins the expression, 'Knowledge by Acquaintance' and uses it on the footing that they are true. And yet these propositions are fraught with immense implications as everyone must realize; for if, as Russell claims here, it is true that we have a direct, perfect, immediate

¹⁴⁹ Hart (1949), p. 76. The lack of commas on (B) is in the original.

and complete knowledge of sense-data but not of chairs or other physical objects then almost all tenets of Russell's philosophy which many find difficult to swallow, follow.¹⁵⁰

It seems to me that Hart is exactly right in thinking that these are controversial theses and Russell's treatment is certainly inadequate if it was meant as a defense of these positions.

Should we defend theses A-D in the defense of an acquaintance theory?

Let's look at each thesis. It seems to me that C and D make the mistake we identified above of calling mere acquaintance "knowledge" and I want to resist that mistake. On my view, we could be directly aware of a property exemplified in experience and not have *any* (propositional) knowledge with respect to the property, much less perfect and complete knowledge. I am not inclined to defend thesis B since I am not sure we are directly aware of the table's properties as opposed to the phenomenal properties exemplified in the experience.

The only thesis here that I am inclined to defend is A. The reason is that the notion of acquaintance is defined as being directly aware of an object without the intermediary of any process of inference or any knowledge of truths. If the view is to be phenomenologically plausible, then any acquaintance theory must motivate the thought that one at least sometimes stands in a relation of acquaintance to constituents of cognitive experience.

¹⁵⁰ Hart (1949), p. 77.

We will now turn to a defense of the thesis that we are, in typical cognitive experience, directly aware of the character of experience. However, my claims in chapter 2 involved more than there being direct awareness of the character of experience; I also claimed that one must be directly aware of the fit that holds between our conceptual judgments and the character of the experience. So in defense of the plausibility of A, I will attempt to motivate the notion that, in addition to being directly aware of the character of one's experience, it is phenomenologically plausible that one is often directly aware of this relation of fit.

3.4 Are We Directly Aware?

I will make the case that we can be and often are directly aware of both the character of experience and the fit between our conceptual judgments and the character of the experience. To make clear what is meant by these contentions it will be helpful to identify what the alternatives are. One alternative is, of course, that the term 'awareness' does not plausibly pick out any part of cognitive experience. Though this is a possible view, it is not one we'll take seriously. The alternative that we will take seriously is the idea that, in sense experience, our awareness is always indirect or mediated. What is it to be indirectly aware of some object? Our awareness of physical objects is, on many views, a mediated awareness. One might say that one is aware of a (physical) table in a way mediated by certain visual and tactile experiences. One might insist that our awareness of the character of

experience is always a conceptual matter, where the relevant sense of being conceptual is one that involves judgments. This is reminiscent of Sellars' claim that awareness of something being thus and so requires the concept of thus-and-so-ness. Robert Meyers makes a similar claim after arguing that even the alleged unproblematic examples of standing in a relation of acquaintance look like they require comparison and discrimination. Meyers concludes, "every supposed case of acquaintance in perceiving involves judgment."¹⁵¹ Thus there is no level of awareness where one fails to, in making a judgment, apply concepts. Thus all awareness is conceptual awareness.

In arguing against this contention and thereby motivating my view, I will proceed in two steps. I will argue that a plausible characterization of *conceptual awareness*, at its most fundamental level, should include a state of direct awareness of the object or fact being conceived. I will then argue that what best explains our competency in making conceptual judgments about experience is that we are directly aware of the relation of fit.

The basic idea of this first step in my argument is that the notion of being conceptually aware seems to imply that, at some level, one is directly aware of that to which the concept applies. That is, it is not clear how one could apply concepts to the experience (and on the basis of the experience) without being aware of the nonconceptual character of the experience. H.H. Price makes this sort of argument in his classic defense of what he calls the

¹⁵¹ Meyers (1970), p. 296.

‘reality of sense data.’¹⁵² Price considers, as an objection to his view, that one cannot apprehend something without apprehending some of its properties. He illustrates the objection by saying “you cannot apprehend a round red patch without apprehending that it is red and round....”¹⁵³ However apprehending *that* something has certain properties requires a judgment or a classification. So, even though we might have taken ourselves to have enjoyed direct awareness here, this objection purports to show that the awareness is conceptual after all. Price’s response is:

The fact that A [the object of direct awareness] and B [the judgmental aspect] are constantly conjoined, or even necessarily connected, does not have the slightest tendency to prove that A does not exist. How could it, since it itself presupposes the existence of A?¹⁵⁴

Paul Hayner makes the claim that:

...description is possible *only if it is preceded or accompanied by acquaintance*. Not only are description and acquaintance not identical, but acquaintance is a necessary condition for description. Without acquaintance there would be no way to apply such a term as "white" to a quality, whiteness, so as to distinguish a white object from an object having some other color quality on the various occasions of our experience of white things...if 'F' may be said to refer to a quality, then there must be acquaintance with that quality if 'F' is to be assigned its proper referent.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Price, H (1950), pp. 1-20. Price thought of sense data as the primary object of direct awareness. So, although I have no truck with his sense datum theory, some of his arguments have import for the epistemological view I am here defending.

¹⁵³ Price, H (1950), p. 7.

¹⁵⁴ Price, H (1950), p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Hayner (1970). p. 297

The point seems to be that the very notion of making a conceptual judgment (at least successfully) involves the application of concepts to something of which we are directly aware. Apprehending *that* something is the case requires one to first have an apprehension of something's being the case. This is to say that experience couldn't be conceptual (as in being conceptually judged) all the way down. Rather, at some fundamental level of our cognitive experience, there must be a nondoxastic awareness of the character of the experience.

The intuition here is that before I could accurately represent the character of the experience being some way or other I would have to be aware of its being that way. If I were to be in pain, I would, in a virtual instant, apply a concept that characterizes the state. I would, in a sense, become conceptually aware of the experience as a pain experience. The argument is that in order to do so, I would have to be directly aware of the character that individuates this particular experience (makes it, in a noncomparative sense, pain and not pleasure) and this awareness couldn't, at its most fundamental level, be mediated by a judgment. If the character of the sensation were to change in a sufficiently dramatic way (say from pain to pleasure), I would not have to judge it to be so in order to be aware of the change.

So, if it is right to say that conceptual awareness of the objects of experience presupposes a more fundamental awareness that is nonjudgmental and direct, we now want to ask how it is that one is able to

make judgments that have any relevance whatsoever to the experience being conceived. Let's assume that we are typically quite competent in making judgments about our experience. When we are being appeared to redly or are in pain, we seem to have no difficulty making the correct conceptual judgment about these experiences. Life would be utter chaos if we were unable to competently make judgments about our experiences. In order to reliably and competently make a judgment that has relevance to our experience, it would seem that we would have to be aware of which concept fits the character of a particular experience. That is, when I am in pain, why don't I conceive of this as being in a pleasure state? Or why don't I judge that aliens live on Mars on the basis of the pain? It seems to me that the reason I do not make these judgments is because these judgments do not fit the state of being in pain and I am aware of this. So it seems that to consistently discriminate experiences of pain from experiences of, say, pleasure, I must be aware of the relevance between my judgment and the experience.

Is there reason to think that this awareness is of the direct sort? It seems to me that our competence in making judgments about our experiences couldn't be a matter of being conceptually aware of the fit of the experiential state to the judgment. To see this suppose that, in order to make the conceptual judgment that I am in pain (call this judgment J1) I had to be conceptually aware that the pain fit or was relevant to the conceptual judgment. Again, conceptual awareness implies that a judgment is being

made. Let's call this judgment J2, which is the judgment that J1 is relevant to the experience. But in order to make J2, I would have to be aware of J2's being relevant to J1's being relevant to the pain. If the awareness of J2's relevance is conceptual awareness, then this would be a still further judgment, call it J3, that J2 is relevant to J1's being relevant to the pain. This regress of judgments is not going to stop if we must be conceptually aware of the relevance of our judgments. In order to make a reliable and competent judgment at all would always require an impossible infinite regress of judgments.¹⁵⁶

Since it could not be awareness that is conceptual, it must be awareness that is not conceptual; it must be direct awareness. This is to say that our ability to make relevant judgments seems to require the direct awareness of the relevance, what I have called the relation of fit.

Admittedly, it is much easier to get before our minds what it is to be directly aware of things like pain or redness as compared to direct awareness of a relation, such as the relation of fit. However, to diffuse some of the difficulty here, imagine that one has two red patches in one's visual field and one notices that these patches match or at least approximate each other. How did one know that there was a match? It couldn't, at its most fundamental level, be by being conceptually aware of the match since this would threaten regress in the same way we saw above. Thus it would have to be the result of direct awareness of the match. But since matching is a

¹⁵⁶ This is similar to Bergmann's regress that results from strong awareness.

relation, this suggests that we are able to be directly aware of a relation such as this. It seems to me that when we reflect on these points, it becomes quite plausible that our ability to make relevant judgments is best explained by the fact that we often enjoy direct awareness of the fit.

One might object to what I have said by arguing that I am presupposing some form of *doxastic voluntarism*, the idea that we exercise some significant degree of control over choosing our beliefs. Someone may grant that if we choose our beliefs, then to believe that p given that I am experiencing p would require me to be aware of the relevance that the experience of p has for the belief that p. However, one might deny the antecedent and claim that our beliefs are the causal result of some cognitive process. Why do I believe that I am in pain when I am in fact in pain? The objection would be that it is because the pain experience produced in me the appropriate belief. I did not have any choice in the matter. One might think that the pain experience could produce in me the (false) belief that I am in a pleasure state but evolutionary survival has selected for cognitive faculties that produce the relevant beliefs. So we happen to have beliefs that fit, on the whole, though it may be claimed that we not generally aware of their fitting.

It certainly seems right to say that one is not in complete control of our belief formation. We find ourselves unable to shake certain beliefs that we would be very happy to refrain from believing. However, I don't think that

belief formation is entirely involuntary. That is, there seems to be some agency involved, though it is often mediated by one's evidence (and probably other social pressures). Our more active involvement in belief formation seems particularly obvious when the experience is an unfamiliar one or is degraded in some way or other, say, by low lighting in a visual case. I seem, at times, to clearly make a choice on how to understand or conceptualize something. Insofar as there is some agency involved in belief formation, then it seems we would have to be aware of the relation of fit to be competent in our judgments.

Even if this degree of control over our belief formation is illusory, I find plausible the idea that it is the awareness of fit that is causally responsible for a belief. Conversely when there is a lack of fit, then this may cause us to refrain from believing. If one were to touch a cold tea pot, one might, for just an instant, take oneself to be in pain from what one thought was a hot teapot. However, we quickly become aware that the sensation, though somewhat intense given its coolness, was not the sensation of pain. It seems to me what may cause us to drop the belief is our awareness of there being a lack of fit.

To summarize what has been said so far, I have argued that Russell's notion of acquaintance as direct awareness is plausibly a part of cognitive experience. I find it phenomenologically plausible that, in experience, one is directly aware of the character of experience and the fit that holds between one's judgments and the character of experience and I have attempted to

motivate the view. We will now consider a powerful argument that casts doubt on direct awareness playing this crucial role in a theory of epistemic justification.

3.5 The Problem of the Speckled Hen

Sense experience, even relatively mundane sense experience, seems rich with detail. It also seems right to say that the particular details are sometimes too fine or too complex for us to represent the experience in thought. Given this richness and given our somewhat limited conceptual resources, it has seemed plausible to many that one may experience this fine-grained richness without being *able to* discriminate or make judgments about all of its finer details. The story of the speckled hen is taken to illustrate this phenomenon.¹⁵⁷ It is best thought of as a counterexample to an acquaintance theory of noninferential justification where it is asserted that one may satisfy all of the acquaintance theorist's conditions of justification with respect to some determinate feature of experience and yet can fail to have any justification for believing that the determinate property is present.

Suppose one comes upon a many-speckled hen in the woods that is in clear view. Let's say there are forty-eight speckles of various sizes and shapes distributed chaotically across the facing surface of the hen. This property will seem for most of the population too high and too complex to

¹⁵⁷ In Chisholm (1942), he says that this problem originated from Gilbert Ryle in a discussion with A.J. Ayer. Paul Ushenko claims that the example of the speckled hen was first given by H.H. Price. See Ushenko (1946), p. 103. See Fumerton (2005), n. 1.

grasp in a single glance. That is, the number of speckles before one outstrips one's ability to be able to grasp by virtue of this experience the precise number of speckles in one's visual field. This is despite the fact that the speckles seem to be right there before one's consciousness. One is, after all, focusing on this grouping of speckles and it seems that one could focus in on features of each particular speckle. Despite this, one is unable to "pick out" the determinate number of speckles.

The acquaintance theorist is faced with a decision on what to say about this scenario. Is one acquainted with the determinate property of being forty-eight speckled and if so, then what explains one's inability to reliably determine the precise number? The objection casts doubt on what the acquaintance theorist had proposed as being a necessarily positive epistemic situation. Here, in the problem of the speckled hen, we see that there are some facts about which the acquaintance relation is inadequate to enable even a reliable belief, much less a belief for which one possesses epistemic assurance.

We should be careful to note that there is a modal claim in the objection. It is not that, on occasion, we simply fail to discriminate some complex constituent of our experience. Rather the claim being made here is that it is at least sometimes causally impossible for us to discriminate certain complex or fine-grained features of our experience.

To put these general points into more concrete terms, let's look at a recent exchange concerning the problem of the speckled hen. Given the notion of direct awareness, Richard Feldman suggests one way to understand the role of direct awareness. He says:

If a person is aware of experiential property F (i.e., has an experience of F-ness), then the person is foundationally justified in believing that he is having an experience with quality F.¹⁵⁸

Now suppose F is the property of being three-speckled. One might be led to think that, of course, if one is aware of the experiential property being three-speckled, then one will have no problem forming the judgment that one is having an experience with this property.¹⁵⁹ We can easily discriminate this property when it is only three speckles. However, suppose that property F is the property of being twelve-speckled or forty-eight-speckled or forty-eight-hundred-speckled. It becomes abundantly clear that unless one has highly functioning savant syndrome, then one is not justified in believing that there are forty-eight (or perhaps even twelve) speckles in one's visual field.

Feldman's discussion of the speckled hen comes as a response to Sosa's raising the problem for classical foundationalism. Sosa suggests that:

One's consciousness contains experiences that go unremarked: unnoticed altogether, or at least unnoticed as experiences with an intrinsic, experiential character that they nevertheless do have. Just

¹⁵⁸ Conee and Feldman (2004), p. 201

¹⁵⁹ Feldman and Sosa both speak as if experience has the property of being speckled with some determinate number. It is not clear if by this they intend to be endorsing a sense-datum theory. I will use the same language to engage in the debate but I do not intend to be endorsing the ontological commitments of the sense-datum theory.

as one automatically jumps one's jumps, smiles one's smiles, and dances one's dances, however, so one experiences one's experiences. And since experiencing is a form of awareness, one is thus in one sense automatically aware of one's experiences, precisely in experiencing them. In the same way one is aware even of experiences that escape one's notice and of which one is hence *unaware*, in another sense. What is more, it is not only her smile that the Mona Lisa smiles; she smiles her specifically enigmatic smile. Similarly, one experiences not just one's experiencing but also one's experiencing in the specific ways in which one does experience.¹⁶⁰

These remarks lead Sosa to make a distinction between ways of being aware. The first sort of awareness that Sosa identifies is where one is aware merely in virtue of having an experience. This is where one can be aware of one's visual field and yet not notice some features of it. Sosa calls this being experientially aware (e-aware). By contrast we seem to have a more reflective level of awareness where we discriminate or notice certain features peculiar to it (n-awareness). Sosa queries with respect to the foundationalist's invoked sense of awareness:

...is it e-awareness or is it n-awareness? The latter will *not* enable the desired explanation, since the concept of "noticing" is itself epistemic in a way that unsuits it for the explanatory work that it is being asked to do. What we want is an explanation in non-epistemic terms of how a noninferential, foundational, belief can acquire epistemic status in the first place, so that holding it is not just arbitrary, so that conclusions drawn from it can inherit epistemic status. Our explanation hence cannot rest with "noticings" that are supposed to have epistemic status *already*. The question will remain as to how *these* beliefs constitutive of the "noticings" have acquired their status.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ Sosa (2003), p. 120.

¹⁶¹ Sosa (2003), p. 120.

If it is n-awareness, then this looks to be a kind of conceptual awareness that will need to itself be justified and thus it is not foundational justification. So Sosa thinks that the foundationalist will be forced to think of the awareness involved in a foundational state as e-awareness where this would include our relation to features of the experience, both noticed and unnoticed. However, if this is right, then Sosa says it runs afoul of the problem of the speckled hen. Recall Feldman's initial proposal for how a foundationalist might make use of awareness for foundational justification. The e-awareness of the property of being forty-eight speckled would satisfy this account and yet it is absurd to think that one could be justified just in virtue of being e-aware.

I think that it is important to note that this amounts to a Sellarsian dilemma since it falls under the general formulation I gave in Chapter 1. Sosa is, in effect, pressing the foundationalist into a dilemma. Either the awareness is e-awareness or n-awareness. If the awareness is e-awareness, then this does not provide justification given the problem of the speckled hen. If the awareness is n-awareness, then there is something doxastic constitutive of this state that will itself need to be justified further. The problem of the speckled hen is one way to argue that an account embracing the nondoxastic horn in relying on direct acquaintance does not provide epistemic assurance. This is because it is, in effect, an SPO. Sosa will argue that one could satisfy all of the acquaintance theorist's proposed conditions of

justification and still have no idea from his subjective perspective what the belief has going for it.

One thing to notice about how Sosa sets up the case is that he seems to take it as simply obvious that experience is a form of awareness; that experiencing one's experiences just means that one is aware of that which one is experiencing. But this might, in a way, seem to build the problem of the speckled hen right into the case. That is, the idea that one is necessarily aware of one's occurrent experiences, especially complex or fine-grained ones, will just result in the idea that one could be experientially aware and yet have some degree of obliviousness to that of which one is e-aware. Instead one could consistently claim that there are experiences and then there is our awareness of the experience and this further awareness need not be a noticing-awareness.

As I have already stressed, awareness is best described as a relation between a conscious being and some object of the awareness. It could be awareness of something or it could be awareness that something is the case. But something or something's being the case is different from one's awareness of these things. So it seems, in principle, possible for there to be experience to which one does not stand in a relation of awareness. Admittedly, it is little strange to think that one may be in, say, pain and yet be unaware of one's being in pain. However, it still seems right to distinguish the pain from the awareness of it. One may hold that there is a constant

conjunction of these states. The thought would be that one does not have experiences unless one is aware of the experience. Perhaps when one ceases to be aware of one's pain, the pain also ceases to exist.¹⁶² However, constant conjunction is not identity.

In any case, even if experience is not itself a form of awareness, this does not solve the problem of the speckled hen. We can make the distinction between conceptual awareness and direct awareness and we are still left with the possibility that one is directly aware of some complex feature of one's experience (e.g., there being forty-eight speckles in one's visual field) and yet, given its complexity, one is not justified in believing that this feature is present. Now we have already gone to lengths to argue that mere acquaintance with experience is not sufficient for justification anyway. So the mere fact that there is something highly complex in our visual field of which we are directly aware, on my view, does not justify our beliefs about this thing (even if it was not highly complex). This, of course, is the mistake of some foundationalists to which Sellars drew our attention. So the proposal that Feldman highlights will not work for more reasons than just the problem of the speckled hen.

¹⁶² Whether or not there is experience of which one is unaware is probably empirically unverifiable for the simple reason that one is being asked to verify the existence of something of which one is unaware. One could verify the typical brain activity associated with pain, even when one is not aware of any pain and, on some views in the philosophy of mind, this would give us our answer. However, on any dualist view, the brain activity would only be circumstantial.

However, what's of particular concern for our purposes is that Sosa poses the problem of the speckled hen specifically for an acquaintance theory of the sort that I am here defending. He argues that there is an analogous problem for positing acquaintance with correspondence, in addressing Richard Fumerton's acquaintance theory. Again, for me, correspondence is the upper limit of fit and so presumably whatever he will say is a problem for a view that requires direct awareness of the relation of correspondence he would also say is a problem for a view that requires direct awareness of the relation of fit. I will argue that the problem of the speckled hen is not a problem for the view I have defended, but that it does raise fundamental questions that will fashion how we craft a more developed statement of the view.

I have argued that one necessarily enjoys epistemic assurance when one is directly aware of the fit that holds between one's judgment and the character of one's experience. Sosa thinks that one could be directly aware of correspondence without this awareness of correspondence providing its subject with epistemic assurance. Sosa describes a case where one has a visual experience of a triangular image, which he calls E. He asks us to suppose also that one has the belief B that there is a triangular image before one's consciousness. He stresses the point that the case that he is imagining is one in which both E and B figure into one's consciousness. So far, so good.

But he then asks what it is for the relation of correspondence that holds between E and B to figure into one's consciousness. Sosa says:

Does [B's corresponding to E] also figure in one's consciousness? Well, if one had two images I and I', both triangular, would it not figure in one's consciousness that the two are isomorphic, or at least would not there *shape-sameness* be given? That would seem to be also constitutive of one's consciousness at the time. And, if so, it could also plausibly be held that the correspondence of B to E, both items in one's consciousness at a given time, would also figure in one's consciousness at that time.¹⁶³

If this is right, then if one were to (occurrently) believe that the number of speckles in one's visual field is forty-eight when there are forty-eight speckles in one's visual field, then, according to Sosa, this is sufficient to satisfy the condition of being acquainted with the correspondence between the belief and the corresponding experience. But it is absurd to think that one enjoys epistemic assurance in this case, despite being acquainted with the correspondence. Thus the claim is that even acquaintance with correspondence is not up to the job of justifying.

3.6 Responses to the Problem

There have been a handful of responses to Sosa's objection to classical foundationalism that I will group into three types of responses. In order to satisfy the requirement of being directly aware of the relation of fit, it seems to me that this implies the satisfaction of three conditions. It is difficult to

¹⁶³ Sosa (2003), p. 130.

understand what it would be to be aware of a relation without being aware of the relata of the relation. So in being aware of the relation, there must be:

1. Direct awareness of the judgment that there are forty-eight speckles in my visual field.
2. Direct awareness of there being forty-eight speckles.
3. Direct awareness of the relation of fit (correspondence in this case) that holds between these relata.¹⁶⁴

Sosa's claims would be effectively blocked if, in the case of the speckled hen, as posed to the acquaintance theorist, one of these three conditions is not satisfied. That is, if we can show that one of these three conditions is not satisfied, then his counterexample fails. In any case, these are three possible ways in which one could respond and each has a proponent in the literature. I, in fact, think that each of these responses has some plausibility in blocking Sosa's objection. I will, however, be arguing for what I take to be the most plausible and dialectically persuasive response the acquaintance theorist has on offer.

3.6.1 Correspondence Response (Poston)

An uncharacteristically weak part of Sosa's argument is the claim that the relation of correspondence figures into one's consciousness when each relatum of the relation figures into one's consciousness. The only argument

¹⁶⁴ I would again stress that this is formulated in a language most natural to a sense-datum theory and this is because Feldman and Sosa formulate things this way. I do not mean to endorse the thought that the experience exemplifies the property of being forty-eight speckled. It would better states as the direct awareness of the judgment that I am being appeared to forty-eight-speckledly and the direct awareness of being appeared to forty-eight-speckledly.

given for this contention is that it seems plausible that relations that hold between objects in one's visual field figure into consciousness and Sosa thinks that the same should be said for the relation that holds between one's judgment and the character of one's experience. Whether the analogy holds here seems quite dubious. It is not easy to say what it means to be acquainted with a relation in the experience as opposed to merely being acquainted with each (would-be) relata (and not the relation itself). However, from the fact that it is difficult to say what it would mean, it is hasty, to say the least, to think that it must therefore figure into one's consciousness.

Ted Poston argues in response to Sosa's claims that, in the case of the speckled hen, one is not directly aware of the correspondence that holds between the belief that one is appeared to forty-eight-speckledly and the fact that one is appeared to forty-eight-speckledly. That is, he thinks that condition 3 is not satisfied in the case. Poston argues that just because the belief and corresponding experience figure into consciousness, this does not mean that the relation of correspondence itself figures into consciousness. To think so would be to invoke some sort of closure principle on e-awareness. He explains what this might amount to:

If S is e-aware of X and Y and there is some relation R such that R(X,Y) then S is e-aware of R(X,Y). Since correspondence is an intrinsic relation between a belief and an experience, if S is e-aware of the belief and the experience, S is e-aware of the correspondence between the belief and the experience.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Poston (2007), pp. 339-340.

Poston, however, thinks there is no reason to think that e-awareness is closed under entailment and that Sosa gives us no real compelling reason to think that it is.

Richard Fumerton has said:

It is certainly true that even if there is an internal relation of correspondence between the thought that P and the fact that P, and even if we are directly acquainted with both the thought that P and the fact that P, it simply doesn't follow that we are directly acquainted with every internal relation holding between the thought and the fact. Consider, for example, entailment. If P entails Q then that entailment holds in all worlds in which P and Q exist—entailment is an internal relation. But it just isn't true that we will be aware of the entailment whenever we hold before our minds P and Q. If it were, logic exams would be much easier than they are.¹⁶⁶

I suppose that Sosa could maintain that Fumerton's example is just an illustration of the very same problem. Entailment is also something that can be very complex and difficult to "spot" but it is "there" when P is a proposition that entails Q. Sosa might insist that it is, for the same reason, there before consciousness when we hold P and Q before our minds. Our inability to detect it only furthers the point that acquaintance is not up to the job of providing justification. If this is right, then Fumerton's point about how logic exams would be much easier were we acquainted with the relation of entailment would beg the question against Sosa. From the fact that one cannot necessarily perform well on a logic exam, it doesn't follow that one is

¹⁶⁶ Fumerton (2005), pp. 129-130. In a footnote, Fumerton points out that a relation that holds between an X and a Y is internal if it is necessary that the relation holds given the existence of X and Y. See Fumerton (2005), n. 10.

not acquainted with the entailment, in Sosa's sense. The logic example would just be analogous to the perceptual problem under discussion.

Though this is a possible position about logical entailment, it does not seem phenomenologically plausible. It also does not seem phenomenologically plausible that when one is acquainted with the relata of a relation, one is thereby acquainted with the relation. We may be aware of some complicated property in our experience and hold a thought about the experience (that happens to correspond to some constituent property in the experience) before our minds without being aware of the correspondence. Suppose I am standing before a large tree with many branches and leaves. I am also reflecting on my favorite number. My favorite number might just happen to correspond to the precise number of leaves that are facing me. However, it seems absurd to think that I would thereby be aware, in any sense, of the correspondence, especially when I haven't formed the belief that there are that many leaves before me. I may even, on the basis of my visual experience, guess how many leaves are there before me. I may even, with great luck, guess correctly but it still seems absurd to think that the correspondence has now figured in to my consciousness.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Poston also makes the point that it seems phenomenologically plausible that one could have a visual image of, say, a dodecagon (twelve-sided polygon) before one's mind, which is relatively simple, and hold the thought of a dodecagon before one's mind and be utterly unaware of the thought's corresponding to the image. Even if one could do this with respect to the dodecagon, we can easily multiply the amount of sides and there will quickly be a point at which one's belief about the number of sides will only be a pure guess.

It seems that in relatively simple experience, we will often be aware of the basic relations that the objects of the experience stand in. Sosa's example of the isomorphic triangles seems somewhat plausible since it is a very simple state of affairs. However, we can imagine a case where the triangles are embedded in a complex arrangement of other shapes and colors. It could still be true that the triangles both figure into one's consciousness but them being isomorphic, it seems, does not.

While I think that this response does block Sosa's objections for an acquaintance theory of the sort I am defending, I think that there is a dialectical drawback here. The solution fails to provide a principled difference between being directly aware of correspondence and failing to be aware of the correspondence even though correspondence may hold between the belief and the experience. Given the fact that acquaintance is *sui generis*, there is already a fair amount of suspicion about what acquaintance is meant to amount to and failing to be able to specify what makes for the difference between these cases fuels this suspicion.

3.6.2 Perceptual Object Response (Ayer/Fumerton)

Another response offered by A.J. Ayer and suggested by Richard Fumerton is to say that, while the hen has some determinate number of speckles, there is no determinate property exemplified in the experience, at least, of which one is aware. This is to deny that condition 2, from above, is satisfied. Ayer says "If the sense-data do not appear to be enumerable, they

really are not enumerable.”¹⁶⁸ It is not that it is neither true nor false that there are a determinate number of speckles exemplified by the datum, for Ayer. Rather his point is that it is *false* that there are a determinate number of speckles exemplified by the datum when they do not appear enumerable. The strategy as it relates to the problem of the speckled hen is to say that the datum exemplifies not the determinate property of being forty-eight-speckled but the *determinable* property of being many-speckled. So the strategy is to say that one is not acquainted with being forty-eight-speckled (i.e., condition 2 is not satisfied). Instead, one is acquainted with being many-speckled.

Chisholm argued that Ayer’s response is not going to work since it produces a contradiction. He says:

...this is very much like saying that victory will come in 1943, but not in January or February or any other particular month up to and including December. If it cannot occur during any of the twelve months which comprise 1943, there is no time left in that year when it *can* occur, and hence it is contradictory to say that it *will* occur in that year. Similarly, if the datum doesn’t have ten, eleven, or a thousand or a million, or any other particular number of speckles, it is contradictory to say that, none the less, it has *many* speckles.¹⁶⁹

Chisholm’s thought is that for there to be this determinable property of being many-speckled, there must exist a determinate property upon which the determinable property supervenes.

¹⁶⁸ Ayer (1963), p. 124. Ayer uses the example of a man reporting on viewing the stars with a clear night sky. If asked how many stars were seen, it seems that there should be an enumerable answer but there isn’t. So, did the man view a determinate number of stars in the experience? Ayer’s answer is no since they did not appear enumerable.

¹⁶⁹ Chisholm (1942), pp. 369-370.

Chisholm's problem can be solved if we make the distinction between the sense datum and the awareness of the datum. There is nothing contradictory about saying that, in the experience, the property of being forty-eight-speckled is exemplified but we fail to be aware of this determinate property. Instead we are only aware of the determinable property of being many-speckled, which is also exemplified by the datum.¹⁷⁰ So this response discharges the claim of contradiction. However, the move does require one to hold that there are, at least, properties exemplified in experience of which one is unaware. It's not just that one fails to notice that there is the determinate property but the property is "there" but fails to figure into one's conscious state.

There are a few worries that mitigate the overall plausibility of this solution. The first worry is the implication just mentioned. One would have to hold that there are properties of experience or exemplified in the experience of which one is utterly unaware. I do not think that this is a noteworthy problem though some will find it to be odd. It is difficult to know what is meant by saying that there is a property *of the experience* of which one is unaware.

Another worry about this response is that it seems one's ability to discern the character of one's experience is the criterion for when one is acquainted with a more or less complex feature of the experience. How does

¹⁷⁰ I am here using the language of the sense datum theory but the same sort of remarks can be made for other theories of perception.

one discover whether one's appearance is enumerable? One could try and notice whether it is enumerable. However, this seems to make judgments play a role in determining relations of acquaintance. Minimally this is awkward for the acquaintance theorist since whether the relation holds is not supposed depend upon judgments.

Despite this one could continue to insist that one is only acquainted with the property of being many-speckled in the case of the speckled hen. However, one must make a further claim if this is to solve the problem. One must say that it is impossible for one to be acquainted with properties while one lacks the powers of discrimination with respect to this property. The reason is that if it is even just possible that one can be aware of a property where one is unable to discriminate the property due to its complexity or fine-grainedness, then the problem of the speckled hen is still a problem. If there is any gap between properties with which one is acquainted and properties of which one can discriminate, then this is a live problem. It seems to me that there is reason to think that it is possible to be directly aware of a property that outstrips one's ability to discriminate. The acquaintance theorist will often appeal to the sort of awareness infants have in order to intellectually ostend the relation of acquaintance. A newborn infant seems to be quite aware of its pain, though it may lack *the ability* to judge that it is in pain. So if the newborn baby can be acquainted with objects which she fails to be able

to conceptualize, it strikes me as plausible that adults are sometimes aware of properties about which we lack the ability to make any judgments.

There are individuals who can reliably discriminate the property of being forty-eight speckled. There are highly functioning savants who can perform amazing feats such as this. What is the difference between the savant and me who cannot discriminate the property of being forty-eight speckled? It seems to me a mistake to think that an ability to make more finely grained judgments should necessarily make for a difference in that with which one is acquainted. Though there no doubt could be a difference in the fine-grainedness of the object of one's awareness, it seems to me to be dialectically prudent to assume that what one is directly aware of in phenomenal experience is generally the same for newborns, adults and highly functioning savants. Thus the problem of the speckled hen, as a counterexample to my acquaintance theory of noninferential justification, still stands. The difference to which Sosa calls our attention must reside elsewhere.

3.6.3 Phenomenal concept response (Feldman)

A third sort of response is to identify the difference between the newborn, the savant, and me as a conceptual difference. The thought is that we may typically be directly aware of there being forty-eight speckles in our visual field while it is also true that we cannot discriminate there being forty-eight speckles in our visual field from there being forty-nine speckles in our

visual field. By contrast, we easily recognize there being simpler properties such as there being three speckles in our visual field. What makes for the difference? The claim is that typical adults do not possess the requisite concept to notice or discriminate there being forty-eight speckles, but do possess the requisite concept to discriminate there being three speckles in the visual field. This is to deny that condition 1 is satisfied in the case of the speckled hen.

This might strike some as an odd thing to say since most of us, even some children, possess the concept “forty-eight”¹⁷¹ and the concept of “being speckled.” It seems to be the case that we possess the composite concept of these two, the concept of “being forty-eight speckled.” It seems that we know what someone is talking about when one identifies some object as being forty-eight speckled.

What is going on here? The answer lies in making a distinction between concepts. Sosa himself distinguishes between different sorts of concepts that might be involved in a typical cognitive experience. There is first of all the very primitive indexical concept. This is where one simply makes reference to some feature of experience but may not, in any substantive way, characterize the feature as being some way or other. The

¹⁷¹ I am imagining a somewhat older child that can easily count to forty-eight and would presumably know what one is saying were he told about Babe Ruth hitting forty-eight home runs in a single season. There is a question about what the nature of this concept would be, even for mature cognizers. It is clear enough that something comes to mind when one is asked to think about forty-eightness, however, it is very difficult to say how this concept differs with a concept of forty-nineness.

expression of an indexical concept would be something like “I am experiencing thusly” where one, in a way, demonstratively “points” to some particular feature of experience.¹⁷² Insofar as the indexical concept refers to something (just about anything will do), the concept comes with a guarantee of truth. Sosa sees this as similar to Descartes’ *cogito*, “I am, I exist,” where the conditions of reference guarantee truth. However, like Descartes’ *cogito*, the worry is that nothing much follows from believing that “I am experiencing this.” That is, the indexical concept seems too thin to provide the foundational justification upon which what we know or justifiably believe must rest.

Sosa identifies another sort of concept which he calls a perceptual or phenomenal concept. Sosa says:

Thicker perceptual concepts go beyond thin indexical ones at least in requiring some ability to recognize the commonality in a diversity of items that co-exemplify some feature. Possession of such a perceptual concept would involve sensitivity, when appropriately situated, to the presence or absence of that feature.¹⁷³

For Sosa, a phenomenal concept is possessed when we can recognize or categorize some phenomenal feature but in a way where we may lack a word or symbol to formulate a description of the feature. The example he gives is an eleven-membered hourglass pattern:

¹⁷² As we will discuss in chapter 4, Tim McGrew defends of theory of noninferential justification that posits these indexical judgments about experience as the foundations.

¹⁷³ Sosa (2003), p. 125.

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It seems that with a glance we would be able to recognize this pattern in a wide variety of instances. It may be dots or it may be stars arranged in this pattern and we would, with a glance, be able to pick it out. However, when we take the same number of dots and arrange them in a linear array we do not have the same recognitional ability:

.....

Most of us are not, with a glance, able to pick out the eleven-membered linear arrangement from, say, the twelve-membered one. Sosa says about our inability to discriminate the eleven membered linear array:

This is in contrast to the eleven-membered hourglass pattern that again we may have no word or symbol for, but that we can think to be present not just as the figure being *thus* patterned, but also as a specific phenomenally grasped pattern that we can go on to recognize [in another instance of the pattern] as the same.¹⁷⁴

With a phenomenal concept also comes a guarantee of reliability since Sosa characterizes it as involving a sensitivity to the actual phenomenal feature. Sosa does allow for some slight degree of fallibility in our phenomenal concept application, but we are, as he says, “nearly always right.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Sosa (2003), p. 125.

¹⁷⁵ Sosa (2003), p. 126.

A third sort of concept is the concepts of simple geometry and arithmetic (henceforth, SGA concepts). He says,

When we apply *these* concepts to our present experience, we can easily go wrong...Classical foundationalism needs some such beliefs with arithmetical or geometrical content, since from purely indexical or phenomenal concepts very little could be inferred.¹⁷⁶

What Sosa seems to have in mind here is that though we can make some sense out of the application of indexical and phenomenal concepts, we obviously apply SGA concepts when we are making judgments about the objects of experience, such as the number of speckles on the facing side of a hen. He thinks that an account that neglects this sort of concept application is an inferior account. But it is our failure to be able to apply the SGA concept in the case of a forty-eight-speckled hen that gives rise to the problem even though most of us possess this concept and wield it competently in other contexts.

Feldman argues that Sosa's distinction between concepts provides a response to the problem of the speckled hen. He says:

Presumably, most of us do not have the phenomenal concept of being forty-eight-speckled, since we are not sensitive to the presence of the property of which it is a concept. We do not respond differentially to forty-eight-speckled images than to forty-seven- or forty-nine-speckled images. We can, of course, believe that an image has forty-eight speckles. Thus, there must be two different "forty-eight-speckle concepts."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ Sosa (2003), p. 126.

¹⁷⁷ Feldman (2004), p. 213.

On the one hand, Feldman thinks that there is the complex concept that is composed of the simpler concepts “forty-eight” and “being speckled.” Most of us possess these concepts and this explains why we can talk about A-Rod hitting forty-eight home runs in the 2005 season and no one in the discussion is at a loss for what we are talking about when we invoke the concept of forty-eightness. But this is not the concept that is needed in the case of the speckled hen. It is also not the concept constitutive of judgments that are justified noninferentially. The SGA judgment about there being a forty-eight speckled thing is inferentially justified, Feldman thinks, from more basic phenomenal concept application.¹⁷⁸

So the reason that one has no idea as to the precise number of speckles exemplified in the experience of a speckled hen when there are forty-eight speckles is because we lack the phenomenal concept for even forming the belief in the first place. So we will not be able to infer the SGA judgment since we lack a basis for doing so. This is clear since, by hypothesis, the subject is unable to recognize or discriminate the presence of the property in one’s visual field. The highly functioning savant does possess this phenomenal concept since he can quite reliably apply the concept to the character of the experience and forms SGA beliefs as a result. Children lack many concepts that we as adults have and have to form these concepts through their cognitive development in order to recognize and conceptualize

¹⁷⁸ For the record, my thoughts developed independently of reading Feldman’s suggestion. I was glad to find someone who agreed and reading his proposed solution definitely helped clarify my own view.

the features of which the child is directly aware. The reason why as adults we can respond differentially to the three-speckled hen is because we do in fact possess a phenomenal three-speckle concept.

3.7 Phenomenal Concepts as the Foundations

I think that Feldman gets this right and this move fits nicely into the view that I have proposed in chapter 2. Feldman does not say a lot about what he thinks an epistemological view that has phenomenal concept application as the foundationally justified beliefs would amount to. I will here try to improve on what has been said so far.

I have argued that if the view is to survive the Sellarsian dilemma, then one must be directly aware of the relation that holds between one's judgment and the justifying state. There I pointed out that this requirement constrains the plausible candidate relations. I argued that the relation of fit is plausibly a relation of which we are directly aware in some fundamental judgments. It is precisely the conceptual judgments about the phenomenal character of our experience that stand in this relation of fit as I have it in mind.

So the concepts in view here appropriately apply to the phenomenal properties exemplified in one's experience, the experiential instances of which make up the *extension* of the concept. Just as Sosa noted, these concepts are extra-linguistic in the sense that they may not be describable in language. We don't apply the phenomenal concept of red to the experience of

phenomenal red given some description that phenomenal redness satisfies. We judge on the basis of the exemplification of certain phenomenal properties that make up the *intension* of the concept. Thus it is the intensional properties which define the concept.

The fact that these conceptual judgments are extra-linguistic presents a profound problem in presenting an account of these states. Alex Byrne has said “the notion of the phenomenal character of experience is hard to explain but easy to understand (at any rate everyone seems to understand it).”¹⁷⁹ The problem is that we oftentimes are not precise when we mention some property, say, red, whether we mean phenomenal red or the red of a material surface. This is further complicated by the fact that the way we, at times, speak of the properties of the experience itself may imply ontological commitments that we are not intending to make or be committed to. The adverbialist strategy is to translate the talk of the experiential-properties so that one is not talking about some thing, the experience, that has the property of, say, phenomenal red. It is the subject who exemplifies the property of being appeared to redly. The adverbialist strategy seems to carry less ontological commitment. However, it is almost impossible to translate every appearing into its adverbial form, especially as the properties get more complicated. For the ease of exposition we have been primarily using the language of the sense-datum theorist in talking about properties of the visual

¹⁷⁹ Byrne (2001), p. 200.

field being speckled in various ways. As we will see, however, talking this way invites an objection we will consider at the close of this chapter.

So, for me, phenomenal concepts are the concepts that correspond to the phenomenal properties exemplified in experience. Phenomenal properties are characterized and individuated by what it is like to experience them. It is by virtue of these concepts that we represent the character of phenomenal experience in thought and, in a way, make sense of the character of our raw sensations. Intuitively, there are characteristic properties exemplified in experience which are best described as what it is like to be appeared to, say, redly. When we are directly aware of being appeared to redly, we typically apply the corresponding concept (the concept of what it's like to be appeared to redly) to the character of this experience.¹⁸⁰

This seems to be true of more complicated experiences as well. There is what it's like to experience a sneeze (or to be appeared to in a sneeze sort of way). Try to offer a linguistic description of the experience as of a sneeze. We can use metaphors, describe the causal processes that lead up to these experiences (using pepper at a meal) or perhaps give a biological and neurobiological description of precisely what occurs when one engages in a sneeze. But none of this describes the experience as of a sneeze. A linguistic description of the phenomenal state itself seems impossible. However, we have no trouble recognizing the experience as of a sneeze. That is, we can

¹⁸⁰ I do think that we apply this concept though, again, it is not as if we state this adverbialist locution in our minds in applying the concept. It is the non-linguistic conceptual correlate that we apply in cognitive experience.

with ease characterize in thought the experience of a sneeze. We can recognize the experience as of a sneeze when it happens to us and we can recognize the experience as of another's sneeze. We may be applying different concepts (at least different tokens of a common type) in these cases since characterizing the experience as of another's sneeze is primarily auditory and visual (let's hope!) whereas when it happens to oneself it is a varied sensation.

I also think that there is what it's like to experience other sorts of states. There is what it is like to have an experience as of a tree or there is what it is like to have an experience as of a sunset. These are complex experiential states, made up of a great variety of phenomenal properties. My proposal here is that we also possess phenomenal concepts for these more complex states and we apply them in those cases of experience. It does not seem to me that when we have an experience as of a tree, we apply simple phenomenal concepts that pick out the simple properties of the experience. Often times we do not notice the simple properties (such as the individual color and shape properties) but only notice them in conjunction with a variety of other properties all at once. So the claim is that there are characteristic phenomenal properties exemplified when one has an experience as of a tree. Insofar as one has a concept that picks out this experience and one is directly aware of the fit that holds between the concept and the experience, one can justifiably apply this concept to the character of the phenomenal experience.

Relating this to the problem of the speckled hen, there is what it is like to be appeared to forty-eight-speckled-henly and it seems possible that we may be directly aware of this complex fact. However, the character of this experience is altogether too complex and fine-grained to accurately represent the character of the experience before our minds. We lack this very fine-grained phenomenal concept and therefore are unable to conceptually discriminate the character of the experience.

3.8 Markie's objection

We are not quite out of the woods yet as Peter Markie has offered an objection specific to Feldman's solution to the problem of the speckled hen.

Markie says:

Classical foundationalism is sometimes rejected on the ground that it presents an overly intellectualized account of how our beliefs about the external world are justified. Direct realists, in particular, assert that we can just see a hen and be foundationally justified in our belief that it, not our experience of it, is three-speckled. We need never, and seldom do, form the beliefs about the character of our experience that classical foundationalists make the basis of all our knowledge of the external world. Feldman's proposal pushes this over intellectualization to a new level. Even ordinary concept beliefs about our experiences are inferentially justified on the basis of phenomenal concept beliefs.¹⁸¹

What Markie finds troubling is that he understands Feldman's proposal as requiring us to form phenomenal conceptual judgments and then make SGA conceptual judgments about the experience on the basis of the phenomenal ones in order to eventually make judgments about the external world. Many

¹⁸¹ Markie (2009), p. 204.

think that it is plainly false that we typically form beliefs about the character of our experience at all and would undoubtedly think that it is even rarer that we make phenomenal conceptual judgments in order to form a belief about the number of speckles in our visual field.

I think Markie is right that this two-step process of introspection does not occur in typical cognitive experience. If Feldman is requiring this for justified beliefs about the external world, then very few of our beliefs are actually justified. Where I disagree is in thinking that we apply what Markie refers to as “ordinary concept beliefs” to the character of our experience.

Sosa doesn't say much about what precisely SGA concepts would amount to. Sosa's silence on this is probably because he thinks we are all quite familiar with what he has in mind. After all these are *simple* geometric and arithmetic concepts. However, I think that Markie (and Sosa) are confusing SGA beliefs about objects in the world, such as the number of speckles on an actual hen, the arrangements of dots, and the shape of an actual stop sign on the one hand and judgments about our experiences on the other. It is true that on the basis of the experience of a speckled hen, we will often believe things and apply concepts, some of which are often SGA concepts. But these apply to the hen not to the sensation as of a hen.

With this in mind, Sosa's assertion is much more controversial than it seems at first blush. He is asserting that the foundationalist must include beliefs with SGA content about experience. But it is very controversial to

think that an SGA concept picks out anything in the experience. What seems to be figuring into the intuition here is thinking of visual sense experience as a literal image or picture in one's mind. If the experience consisted in there being a mental image that pictures the hen, then it seems right to think that there is something in the experience that exemplifies the SGA property. But this sort of overly crude sense datum theory is hard to take seriously. It needlessly complicates experience since now we are going to want to know what it is to "see" the mental image. So far from illuminating anything about the nature of experience it simply complicates it. Most philosophers these days reject any kind robust picture theory or that there is literally a visual image before one's mind that exemplifies the same properties that the hen, for example, exemplifies. Philosophers will, however, often metaphorically describe, say, visual experience as something loosely analogous to viewing a picture but it would seem that finding a tight correlation is fraught with difficulties. Minimally, this is a controversial way of thinking of experience, certainly not one that should be assumed.

With this made clear, this response to the problem of the speckled hen does not add a layer to what the classical foundationalist has already posited.¹⁸² So this may not be a *radical* over-intellectualization of cognition, but there will still be the objection that requiring any judgments about the

¹⁸² Markie may be right that Feldman was adding an extra layer. It is unclear in Feldman's remarks whether he thinks that there SGA properties are exemplified in the experience. The point I am making here is that this solution to the problem of the speckled hen does not necessarily add an additional layer to cognition.

character of experience over-intellectualizes things. It seems to me that this is an objection that every classical foundationalist must face. I will address this objection in chapter 4 more fully but, for now, it is important to stress that we don't typically take even a moment to deliberate about the phenomenal character of our experience in making these judgments. These are extraordinarily subtle in the sense that the moment we open our eyes, or have any experience whatsoever, there can be a constant output of these recognitional judgments, often without the meta-awareness that we are making these judgments. We just go about conceiving on the fly, as it were. I will also say that we often fail to explicitly notice our making these judgments since we lack the language to refer to the concepts involved in the judgments given their extra-linguistic nature. So rather than over-intellectualizing here, the thought is that these judgments are exceedingly mundane, phenomenologically speaking. In fact, they are so mundane that we rarely attend to the fact that we are making them.

CHAPTER 4: THE TRUTH CONNECTION AND THE RELATION OF FIT

I have identified the relation of fit as a relation that holds between conceptual judgments and the character of experience, where this character can be a more or less complex state composed of phenomenal properties exemplified in the having of experience.¹⁸³ In the last chapter, I argued for the overall plausibility of being directly aware of the relation of fit in cognitive experience. In this chapter, I will say more about the relation of fit especially as it relates to our epistemic pursuits. Our pursuits that are epistemic, in the way that I will use the term, are defined by the pursuit of true beliefs, beliefs which correspond to reality.¹⁸⁴ It would be nice if we could simply have all and only true beliefs. Though this may be God's cognitive situation, were he to exist, this is decidedly not our cognitive situation. In order to achieve the epistemic goal of truth, we must possess and believe on the basis of justification that, in some way, *positions* us to believe truly.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ I, again, remind the reader that I am staying neutral as to the precise nature of the properties exemplified in the having of experience as well as the precise bearer of these properties. I say "exemplified in the experience" so as to not commit myself to the experience itself being the bearer of the properties.

¹⁸⁴ I will here be assuming that truth is correspondence with reality, broadly construed.

¹⁸⁵ There may be more than one cognitive goal. There is a considerable controversy over whether truth is the primary cognitive goal. I do in fact believe that truth is (or should be) the primary goal in our cognitive pursuits. However, I will not argue for this here and nothing I say turns on the contention so long as one agrees that truth is at least one cognitive goal. If so, then when we think of epistemic justification, we are thinking of justification that has something to do with truth.

Being merely positioned to believe truly may imply the possibility of error. A major focus of this chapter will be saying what sort of possibility can be allowed for in an account of noninferential justification. On my use of the terminology, the relation of fit is a genus of which correspondence is a species. Indeed the correspondence relation is the upper limit of the relation of fit. However, on my view, a judgment can fit a state where this fit is something less than correspondence. For me, correspondence does not admit of degrees. When a belief stands in a relation of strict correspondence to a state, then the belief is true. And when it doesn't, then the belief is false. However, the relation of fit admits of degrees in the sense that a belief could fit a state to a greater or lesser degree. This, unlike standing in a relation of correspondence, allows for the possibility of error. So what is fit? As something of a "working definition," we will say that fit is correspondence or something near enough. When one is aware of one's judgment standing in a relation of fit to a state, one's judgment either corresponds to a state or corresponds to a state that is very similar to the state of which one is aware.

It is an understatement to say that offering an adequate account of the correspondence relation is a difficult undertaking. Adding to these thorny matters degrees of more or less fit only makes the situation worse. Just like the relation of acquaintance, the relation of fit does not admit of the possibility of reductive analysis. As was mentioned above, this is to some degree to be expected when one is exploring such fundamental matters. The

relation of fit or correspondence is another of the logical atoms upon which all the rest of what we understand depends. Indeed there is perhaps nothing more fundamental in the cognitive enterprise than the relation of fit or correspondence and our direct awareness of these relations.

What is *not* being claimed is that there is nothing we can say in characterizing the relation of fit. However, rather than offering a reductive analysis, we will characterize the relation by what we might call “intellectual ostension.” This is where one “points,” intellectually, to the relation in the hope that others will “find” the relation as a plausible feature of cognitive experience.

In the following, we will first explore what sort of truth connection is needed for achieving epistemic assurance from the subject’s perspective. I will argue that being directly aware of the relation of fit provides this connection for noninferential justification. We will then attempt to ostend what I have in mind for a judgment to stand in a relation of fit.

4.1 The Truth Connection

There is a variety of ways that the term “justification” is used. One may have some pragmatic reason for engaging in, say, self-deception. Perhaps a wife refrains from entertaining the idea that her husband has not been faithful even though there is some highly suspicious activity. Stewart Cohen gives the example of a defense attorney who convinces himself that his client is innocent in order to best serve his client’s interest in mounting a

defense.¹⁸⁶ Perhaps these beliefs are justified in some sense but not in a sense that has to do with truth since the beliefs are being held in spite of whatever the truth happens to be.

By contrast, what makes the justification in view *epistemic* is that the justification for a belief relates the belief, in some non-accidental way, to truth. Richard Fumerton has stated:

When a belief is justified it has a virtue. There is something good about it. From the epistemic perspective, virtue has to do with *truth*. The reason epistemologists want epistemically justified beliefs, it is presumed, is that having justified beliefs has *something* to do with having true beliefs.¹⁸⁷

An epistemically justified belief is one that has a connection to the truth. It seems that the connection must be a non-accidental one. When a belief is epistemically justified, it cannot just happen to be the case that the belief is true. I am thinking here of Gettier cases such as when one looks at a stopped clock that just happens to be reading the right time.¹⁸⁸ One's belief formed on the basis of this evidence would be true but it is accidentally true.

It bears mentioning that, on many views of epistemic justification, when we say a belief is justified, we need not mean that the belief is thereby true. However, the thought is that the justification had better give us reason to think that the belief is true if it is to be an epistemic reason. It is in this

¹⁸⁶ Cohen (1984), p. 279.

¹⁸⁷ Fumerton (1995), p. 97.

¹⁸⁸ Gettier's original cases are given in Gettier (1963). This particular example was given by Bertrand Russell before Gettier first published his famous article. See Russell (1948), p. 154.

sense that the belief is non-accidentally truth-connected. It is sometimes said that epistemic justification is *truth conducive*. We are in a position to believe truly by virtue of epistemic justification, though, on a wide range of epistemological views, it may turn out to be the case that the belief is false.

Conceptually, the notions of justification, truth and belief seem tightly interwoven. It seems that the reason that justification should have something to do with truth has to do with the nature of a belief state itself. What I mean by this is that “believing that p” is naturally understood as taking p to be the case. The deflationist about truth thinks that saying “p is the case” is equivalent to saying “it is true that p is the case.” However, one need not be a deflationist to think that in taking p to be the case, by the very nature of the belief, one is thinking that p is true.¹⁸⁹ If one were to assert the belief that “God exists” and then one’s interlocutor queried whether or not one thinks that it is true that God exists, one is likely to repeat the belief. That is, the nature of a belief state itself has something to do with truth. So if having justification *for a belief* means that the belief has a virtue, then, given the nature of belief, a good belief is a true belief (or perhaps one that is likely to be true). Intuitively, what it means to have a reason for one’s belief then is that one has a reason for thinking that the belief is true. Or perhaps

¹⁸⁹ There is a worry here in that one might think that children have beliefs but they do not possess the concept of “truth.” One might think that the concept of truth is too complicated for a child to understand. This might be right but it seems to me that children have something of an inchoate concept of truth. It seems to me that it is very early on in a child’s development that they understand what it is to think something is right only to find out they were wrong.

more neutrally, there being an epistemic reason for a belief means that the belief is likely to be true relative to that evidence. Likewise, if one lost one's justification or the justification became otherwise defeated, then one also should not take the belief as true. This seems right even if there are other sorts of "reasons" for believing.

Presumably, there is also more than one way for a belief to be related to the truth. There has been no shortage of views in the history of epistemology that attempt to identify a property in virtue of which a belief is properly related to the truth (or perhaps better stated as that which properly relates the believer to believing truly). Descartes, for example, thought that beliefs (or ideas rather) that are held clearly and distinctly would be true beliefs. One such belief is "*I am, I exist*" and this he says "is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived in my mind" (Med. 2, AT 7:25). The reliabilist thinks that a belief's being reliably formed properly relates a belief to the truth and thereby makes the belief rational. It is related to the truth in the sense that being reliable, the belief-forming process is one that tends to produce true beliefs.

A very strong connection to the truth is secured by the proper functionalist. The proper functionalist thinks that it is a belief's being the result of properly functioning cognitive faculty that makes a belief justified

(or “warranted,” for Alvin Plantinga).¹⁹⁰ However, one possible worry is that a properly functioning cognitive faculty may not be designed to output true beliefs. Perhaps the faculty is designed to minimize psychological trauma and sometimes falsehoods are better at this than truths.¹⁹¹ Thus both Plantinga and Bergmann add a condition to their respective theories that the cognitive faculties must be aimed at the production of true beliefs.¹⁹² This tightly connects the notion of justification (or warrant) to truth since the belief will be produced by a well-designed cognitive faculty whose function is to output true beliefs and it is functioning according to its design.

The internalist has often been charged with failing to make a tight connection with truth. Take, for example, an internalist who thinks that a belief about the external world is justified by sense experience. One question that the internalist must answer is why sense experience provides a reason to think that the world is the way one takes it to be on the basis of the experience. There have been those internalists who have defended a view of epistemic justification according to which rationality is *deontic* in character. The idea is that a justified belief is one in which a believer would be “epistemically blameless” in believing. More precisely, one is epistemically justified in believing *p* if and only if one is epistemically blameless in

¹⁹⁰ Warrant, as defined by Plantinga, is whatever turns a true belief into knowledge. This is different from justification since a true belief can be justified and yet not knowledge, given problems like the Gettier problem.

¹⁹¹ This is an example that Bergmann uses. See Bergmann (2006), p. 135.

¹⁹² See Plantinga (1993), pp. 19, 46-47; Bergmann (2006), pp. 134-135.

believing *p*. It turns out to be very difficult to say what it means to be *epistemically* blameless where this is presumably something different from being *morally* blameless. In any case, the typical complaint against a deontic view of justification is it seems that one may be epistemically blameless and yet not epistemically rational. That is, being epistemically blamelessness is not identical to being epistemically justified.

Even though I think this is right, it is not as easy as one might think to offer a case in which one is epistemically blameless and yet not epistemically justified. Bruce Russell gives the following as an example of an epistemically blameless belief that is alleged to be epistemically unjustified:

Someone who grows up in a religious society and is taught to listen to the deliverances of an oracle can be epistemically blameless in believing those deliverances even though her belief may not really be supported by the evidence and so is objectively *unjustified*.¹⁹³

The problem is that insofar as it is clear that the one is epistemically unjustified, it is not clear that one should be thought of as epistemically blameless. To be sure, we wouldn't blame, in some sense of blame, the person who grows up in this religious society with certain social pressures for believing the oracle. Perhaps it is a somewhat innocuous creation myth that one is believing and there is a real threat of being ostracized if one were to question the authority of the delivered story. However, by hypothesis, her belief is not supported by the evidence.¹⁹⁴ So why would we be tempted to

¹⁹³ Bruce Russell (2001), p. 36.

think that she is blameless in an epistemic sense when her belief runs contrary to the evidence? I might have been raised to always “go with my gut,” but this does not mean I am epistemically blameless when I believe that my lottery ticket is the winner given a distinct feeling in my gut. Likewise, insofar as the religious follower is believing contrary to the evidence, one might think that, for this very reason, the belief is, epistemically speaking, worthy of blame. One might insist that, contrary to what Bruce Russell says here, the epistemically responsible belief in this case is the belief that would accord with the evidence. But if this is right, then, intuitively, epistemic blamelessness is now tracking epistemic justification.¹⁹⁵

In any case, I think that this is what the epistemic deontologist should say, but the story quickly gets more complicated and, on the final analysis, I think that epistemic blamelessness does come apart from epistemic justification.¹⁹⁶ I will not be exploring that point here. However, the point that I do wish to make is that the dialectic here turns on making the truth

¹⁹⁴ There will be some question whether the deliverances of the oracle constitute testimonial evidence, since a great deal of what we believe is on the basis of testimony from a putative authority.

¹⁹⁵ A better counterexample to the deontological view is where the subject believes some wildly irrational thing and could not have believed otherwise. Conee and Feldman give the example of a man in the grips of paranoia who believes he is being spied on. It is harder for the deontologist to make the same case when one couldn't have believed otherwise. See Conee and Feldman (1985), p. 17.

¹⁹⁶ The reason for this is that if “epistemic blamelessness” is to do any work for the deontologist, then it seems to me that there must be a sense in which one could have done otherwise in one's belief formation. It strikes me that we would be able to come up with a case of one suffering from radical paranoia such that one could not have believed otherwise in any relevant sense. If “blamelessness” is to illuminate the notion of justification rather than just be another word for “justification,” then one should be considered epistemically blameless here though one possesses no epistemic justification.

connection with the concept of epistemic blamelessness and duty fulfillment. The objection against the deontologist is that one can be blameless in one's belief forming practices and yet the beliefs so formed are wildly disconnected from the truth. My suggested strategy for the deontologist to rebut this objection is to argue that the blamelessness in view has something to do with truth. If that is right, then a deontologically justified belief cannot be one that is wildly disconnected from the truth. So even on the deontological view which is sometimes thought of as a retreat from more objective notions of justification, one must make the connection with truth. It seems to me that this need generalizes to all forms of internalism. The internalist must show that the possession of the justification puts the believing subject in a good position for believing truly.

We will, of course, need to say a lot more about what this amounts to but before we can do that it is important to consider what Tim and Lydia McGrew (hereafter, the McGrews) think is a crucial distinction between ways in which a justifier may constitute justification that is epistemic, that connects the belief to the truth.¹⁹⁷ They think that when a believing subject is epistemically justified in the belief that p, the subject has an objectively good reason for believing that p. However, the McGrews point out that there are various senses of "objective reasons." They think that it is very tempting to think of an objective reason as one merely having a tendency or high

¹⁹⁷ McGrew and McGrew (2006), p. 38. They make more than one distinction here. The first is to distinguish between sources of belief (perception, memory, intuition, etc.) on one hand and inference forms, both non-deductive and deductive, on the other.

frequency of turning out true beliefs. Going with one's gut is an objectively bad reason precisely because it does not have the tendency to produce true beliefs. So one way of understanding justification in an objective sense is to think of the source of the belief as reliable.

This understanding of objective reason is what they call having an *extrinsic connection* to the truth. They say that an extrinsic connection “denotes some form of reliability in the world.”¹⁹⁸ The idea seems to be that there are states that may reliably produce true beliefs, but this fact is not intrinsic to the state upon which the belief is based. Rather it is due to the fact that the belief's being based on this state happens to make likely the belief's being true. Its connection to truth, if there is one, is contingent on factors extrinsic to the state upon which it is based. It seems that just about any belief-forming process could have an extrinsic connection to the truth in this sense. We could have been so constituted that wishful thinking or going with one's gut is a reliable belief-forming process and that perceptual experience is wholly unreliable in getting us true beliefs.

Though this is one sort of truth-connectedness, it is not the sort of truth connection that many internalists seek. Instead, the internalist seeks a truth connection such that the justifier is an objectively good reason due to something about the state itself, where its being objectively good does not depend on external factors. The state itself has some intrinsic virtue in relation to the truth. The McGrews say:

¹⁹⁸ McGrew and McGrew (2006), p. 39.

The possession of this virtue would mean that the argument constitutes an “objectively good reason” for its conclusion in the sense of a non-relativistically good reason, regardless of whether that argument form, or the inference from those sorts of sensations to that sort of conclusion, has in some further sense an external-world “propensity” to yield true conclusions.¹⁹⁹

A reason for thinking that a belief is true is not relative to some contingent feature that is extrinsic to the reason itself. Rather the reason itself necessarily constitutes an objectively good reason.

4.2 Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic

What sort of truth-connection should the epistemologist seek? One problem here in answering this question is that the McGrews’ distinction has been, to some degree, neglected in the literature. I can imagine, though, at least two reasons that one might think that an extrinsic connection to the truth is sufficient for justification. The first is what amounts to an intuitive reason. When one’s belief is extrinsically connected to the truth, then we intuitively think of this belief as an epistemically good belief. The second is that extrinsic connection to the truth is a more secure connection than the intrinsic one. If one’s beliefs are extrinsically connected to the truth given the justification one possesses, then it is not possible for the majority of one’s beliefs to be false.

One might think that, intuitively speaking, an extrinsic connection to truth is an epistemically valuable thing. Indeed certain externalists will

¹⁹⁹ McGrew and McGrew (2006), p. 39.

claim that a belief being produced by, say, perceptual faculties may justify a belief but this is only a contingent matter. Our perceptual faculties could be malfunctioning or could simply be unreliable in a certain environment. If this were true, then a belief produced by perceptual faculties would not be justified. However, the thought is that when properly functioning and reliable faculties have this output of true beliefs, this would presumably enable the believing subject to reliably navigate its environment. This is, in an epistemic sense, a good thing.

The internalist, by contrast, will often claim that if a belief is justified by some state, then this is a necessary truth. Michael Bergmann formulates this view as the Necessity Thesis:

The [appropriateness] of doxastic response B to evidence E is an essential property of that response to that evidence.²⁰⁰

The idea is that, on the necessity thesis, there is a necessary connection between a justified belief and the state that does the justificatory work.

There is no possible world in which one has that belief and that same justification without the belief being justified.²⁰¹ The belief's being justified is not merely a contingent matter given the evidence one has.

²⁰⁰ Bergmann (2006), p. 112. Bergmann uses the term “fittingness” instead of “appropriateness.” The reason for the change is that the notion “fit” has figured centrally into this project but with a very different meaning from the way in which Bergmann is using it. Bergmann cites Richard Feldman as the prime example of one who endorses necessity. See Feldman (2004), p. 155 “In Search of Internalism and Externalism”.

²⁰¹ One may think that there being a defeater for a belief may be a problem for the necessity thesis. The problem might be that there could be a possible world where one possesses that justification but also has some defeater for the justification. So it could look

Bergmann rejects the necessity thesis. He has a counterexample that he thinks demonstrates that the appropriateness of a doxastic response is a contingent matter. Bergmann first states that it seems sensible to think that sensations have no necessary connection to what the sensations indicate. We could have been constituted differently where an experience of a certain sort might have indicated something very different from what it indicates for us. Bergmann cites Thomas Reid as a proponent of such a view. Reid said that given the fact that there seems to be no logical connection between our sensations and the content of beliefs based on these sensations, that “no man can give a reason why the sensations of smell, or taste, or sound, might not have indicated hardness.”²⁰² Bergmann invites us to consider the matter in the abstract saying:

...tactile sensations do not seem to be any more suited than olfactory sensations to being indicators of hardness. Thus, it seems there could have been cognizers like us in outward appearance who experience, upon grabbing a billiard ball, a sensation that is qualitatively of the same type as one of our actual world sensations of smell.²⁰³

So, according Bergmann, it seems possible for a cognizer to be so constituted that an olfactory sensation (Bergmann gives the example of our typical experiences in smelling meadow of flowers) *indicates* a fact about hardness. He says that this olfactory sensation could produce, as a natural and

as if the necessity thesis fails on this point. However, a defender of the necessity thesis could say that when one comes to possess a defeater the overall state of justification changes.

²⁰² Reid (1997), p. 57.

²⁰³ Bergmann (2006), p. 119.

unlearned doxastic response, the belief that ‘there is a smallish hard round object in my hand’ (what Bergmann refers to as B1).²⁰⁴ So the idea is of a person who when holding a billiard ball has the sensation that we typically have when we smell a field of flowers. But rather than producing a belief about flowers (which would be false), this sensation produces the *true* belief that there is a smallish hard round object in my hand (i.e., B1).

This is not enough to deny the necessity thesis. This is only to say that one could be so constituted that one has B1 when one has the above mentioned olfactory sensation. Necessity has to do with B1’s being an appropriate response to the olfactory experience. So is B1 an appropriate belief given the olfactory sensation? All Bergmann says at the end of the section is this:

What should we say of a species of cognizers for whom the natural unlearned response to grabbing a billiard ball is to experience [the olfactory sensation we have when smelling flowers] and then form B1? It seems we should say that for such cognizers, B1 is [an appropriate] unlearned response to [the olfactory sensation] and an [inappropriate] unlearned response to [the tactile sensation we have when grabbing a billiard ball].²⁰⁵

In one sense this is not much of an argument. However, my guess is that

Bergmann finds intuitive the idea that since the olfactory sensation as of a

²⁰⁴ This is in contrast to the experience that is typically had when one picks up and holds in one’s hand a billiard ball.

²⁰⁵ Bergmann (2006), p. 120. The quote comes in the context of a larger discussion where Bergmann has made a number of distinctions not relevant to us here. The undoctored quote is: “What should we say of a species of cognizers for whom the natural unlearned response to grabbing a billiard ball is to experience ME2 and then form B1? It seems we should say that for such cognizers, B1 is a *fitting* unlearned response to ME2 and an *unfitting* unlearned response to ME1.”

flower smell results in a true belief and it would do so in a reliable way for cognizers so designed, then one should think of this as a justified belief.²⁰⁶

So, is this hypothetical cognizer with flower sensations that are the result of holding a billiard ball justified when the cognizer's faculties are functioning properly and reliably in the environment for which they were designed? I think not, at least in my sense of justification where we are after epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective. The cognizer would have no problem getting around in the world in the imagined example. But this is not all that it is to be rational. If the cognizer were aware of B1's being produced by the sensation, then the cognizer has an idea of its causal history. But again this does not, from the subject's perspective, make an epistemic difference. There is nothing about having the olfactory sensation that would indicate the positive epistemic status of B1, a belief about the hardness of a billiard ball in one's hand. Remember that this is what Bergmann calls an *unlearned* and *automatic* doxastic response. It seems to me that the first time the cognizer had this response the cognizer would be utterly at a loss for what this belief had going for it. We can imagine many other beliefs that are also unlearned and automatic doxastic responses but ones that get it terribly wrong. These would seem to be no different from the subject's perspective.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ We should note that Bergmann's proper functionalism is not strictly speaking a reliabilism but he does have a reliability condition and so reliability certainly plays a role in his view. However, it is reliability indexed to a cognitive environment for which one is designed. See Bergmann (2006), p. 133-137.

²⁰⁷ We are assuming here that the subject does not have a track record argument for the reliability of the properly functioning cognitive faculties. If the subject did, then this case

The second reason that might be put forward for thinking that an extrinsic connection to the truth is preferable is that if an intrinsic connection is made, it will still be, in principle, possible for a majority of justified beliefs to be false. To see this, let's suppose that one can establish an intrinsic connection between sense experience and some beliefs that are based directly on sense experience. This is to say that the epistemologist has identified some essential feature of the cognitive experience that makes likely the beliefs that are based upon it. So in the actual world, perhaps this results in the believing subject having mostly true beliefs. However, it seems that there is a possible world where sense experience is intrinsically indistinguishable from the actual world and yet is the result of the machinations of an evil demon. These beliefs are mostly false. This possible world does not negate the fact that the beliefs are likely to be true (even in this possible world) since the likelihood is relative to the evidence and the evidence is precisely the same in both cases, on this view. The point is that it is possible with an intrinsic connection to have mostly false beliefs whereas if there is an extrinsic connection, then one might think that this ensures the truth of the majority of our beliefs.

The problem with this sort of argument is twofold. For one, it gets the intuition wrong about the world in which our experiences are demon-induced.

would be different since the subject would not be believing only on the basis of the sensation but also this internal evidence.

This is sometimes referred to as the “new evil demon problem.”²⁰⁸ Stewart

Cohen posed the problem this way to reliabilist theories:

Imagine that unbeknown to us, our cognitive processes (e.g., perception, memory, inference) are not reliable owing to the machinations of the malevolent demon. It follows on a Reliabilist view that the beliefs generated by those processes are *never* justified.²⁰⁹

Cohen continues:

What we want to suppose is the mere truth of the demon hypothesis. Now part of what the hypothesis entails is that our experience is just as it would be if our cognitive processes were reliable. Thus, on the demon hypothesis, we would have every reason for holding our beliefs that we have in the actual world.²¹⁰

The idea is that the demon is crafty enough to keep everything exactly, from our perspective, as it would be in the actual world. Reliabilists sometimes claim that we have reason to believe that our beliefs in this world are reliably formed. If this is true, given the thought experiment, we would have this exact same reason for thinking that our cognitive faculties are reliable in this world. Cohen says:

It strikes me as clearly false to deny that under these circumstances our beliefs could be justified. If we have every reason to believe e.g., perception is a reliable process, the mere fact that unbeknown to us it is not reliable should not affect its justification-conferring status.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Its newness is in the fact that it is not the same sort of evil demon problem posed by Descartes in his *Meditations* that philosophers have used to raise a different sort of skeptical worry.

²⁰⁹ Cohen (1984), p. 281.

²¹⁰ Cohen (1984), p. 281.

²¹¹ Cohen (1984), pp. 281-282.

So the response is that it is indeed possible for a majority of our justified beliefs to be false if we posit an intrinsic connection to the truth. However, though this would certainly be an unwelcome result, it, qua possibility, is not by itself a counterintuitive consequence.

In addition to this, whatever assurance that an extrinsic connection is supposed to provide will always be conditioned on whether the extrinsic connection holds. That is, the possibility of having mostly true beliefs, given an extrinsic connection to the truth, is only reassuring if that possibility is a reality. The demon world seems possible. Thus we need some reason to believe that we are not part of that world in order for an extrinsic connection to truth to be, from our perspective, reassuring.

In summary, it is not possible for a merely extrinsic connection to truth to satisfy the epistemic desideratum outlined in Chapter 2. In the hypothetical case, Norman gets his beliefs right in a reliable way. It is precisely because his belief only makes an extrinsic connection to truth that this becomes an SPO. An intrinsic connection to the truth is a necessary condition for securing epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective. It seems to me that any merely extrinsic connection will, by its very nature, allow for an SPO case such that the subject may have a belief that is extrinsically connected to the truth but have no idea that it is connected. We looked at two reasons to prefer an extrinsic connection to the truth and found them wanting.

4.3 Entailment, Incorrigoibility and Fallibility

If we have established the need for an intrinsic connection to truth, it will be important to ask how tight of a connection is needed. One very tight connection to the truth is a view that would require one's justification to stand the test of Cartesian indubitability. Here the idea might be that one's justification must entail the truth of one's belief. If one takes truth-entailment as a general condition that all justification must satisfy, then this way is the well-rehearsed road to radical skepticism. Even though the result of radical skepticism is not by itself, on my view, sufficient for the reductio status of the view that leads to it, it is admittedly a counterintuitive result and I think, if at all possible, appropriately resisted.

One way to perhaps resist the result of radical skepticism is to require a truth-entailment not for any and all justification but only for noninferential justification. One might think that it is important for *foundational* beliefs to have infallible justification but require something less than infallibility when it comes to the beliefs that are inferred from these foundations. It has been tempting for foundationalists to think that infallibility is possible for a certain class of beliefs: the beliefs that are about the contents of one's own mind, including thoughts and sensations.

The McGrews defend a view along these lines. They require what they call 'incorrigoibility' but it is only required for noninferentially justified beliefs

or beliefs that are *basic*. In an earlier work by one half of the McGrew duo,²¹² Tim McGrew defines incorrigibility thusly:

For my belief in some contingent proposition *p* to be incorrigible entails that, necessarily, if I believe it, then the belief is true.²¹³

The relevant incorrigible beliefs, on the McGrews' view, are beliefs that are formed referentially about the character of one's experience. These are much like the indexical beliefs that Sosa defined. Tim McGrew makes the point that:

There is a difference between seeming to have a hamburger and really having one, and we can imagine circumstances (however bizarre) under which the two could come apart. But if your doctor tells you that you merely *seem* to yourself to be in desperate pain and that you are in fact feeling fine, then it is time to find a new doctor.²¹⁴

The point seems to be that, in pain experience, we are aware of the pain itself. We are aware of hamburgers only indirectly on the basis of various sorts of experiences. It is possible that one could have a hallucinatory experience as of a hamburger that is indistinguishable from the veridical experience. Thus, it may seem to one that there is hamburger when there

²¹² Though this is Tim McGrew's earlier work, Lydia McGrew seems to embrace the same view.

²¹³ McGrew (1997), p. 228. Though McGrew thinks that incorrigibility is necessary for noninferential justification, he does not seem to hold that incorrigibility is sufficient for justification. If he did, this would create a problem since there are some incorrigible beliefs that involve necessary truths that no one will think are justified noninferentially. For example, the conjunctive belief that "I exist and the square root of 769,129 is 877" is incorrigible since, necessarily, if one believes this, then it is true. But most people will not be able form this belief and be noninferentially justified in believing it.

²¹⁴ McGrew (1997), p. 228.

isn't. Pain and other sensory states themselves are not like this. At least one notion of what it is for a sensory experience to *seem* a certain way is for the sensory experience to be that way.²¹⁵ Thus it cannot seem to one that one is in pain and this not be the case.

When I have a particular experience and express this fact to you, I am referring to something that I am directly aware of. Given the constraints of natural language, I am likely to try to use shared terms in order to convey to you the quality of the experience as I have it, but I do not have to describe it to myself in order to have the experience. Perhaps the closest linguistic construction to the belief I form is "I am experiencing *this*," where the italicized term picks out the experience in question by denoting it. A belief formed in this fashion cannot go wrong, for a very simple reason: if there were nothing for the term *this* to refer to, it would not be possible to form the belief at all.²¹⁶

The belief itself is referential so that constitutive of the belief is the very truthmaker of the belief. So it is necessarily true whenever it is believed because the truthmaker is constitutive of the belief.

The thought is that if one has truth here at the foundations, then with what the McGrews call 'transmissive principles,' the truth is appropriately "transferred" to higher-order beliefs. It's precisely here that the possibility of error enters in since the transmissive principles will not always be deductive, for the McGrews. However, if the foundations are securely connected to

²¹⁵ I have in mind Chisholm's noncomparative use. See Chisholm (1957), pp. 43-53.

²¹⁶ McGrew (1997), p. 228. McGrew's view has some interesting similarities to content externalism since the externalist about thought content thinks that it is the environment that fixes the meaning of one's thought. McGrew's view is similar in that the content of the demonstrative belief is fixed by whatever one points in the experience by means of the demonstrative belief.

truth, then the hope is that some justification-preserving inferential relations can secure the rest of what we rationally believe. The McGrews say:

...in corrigible foundations formed referentially clearly possess an intrinsic connection to truth, for whenever they are believed, they are by their very nature guaranteed to be true.²¹⁷

It is clear that incorrigible foundations possess an intrinsic connection to truth. They entail their truth. However, I will argue that incorrigibility or infallibility is not necessary for noninferential justification. So long as some other intrinsic truth connection can be established that is something short of entailment, then it seems that whatever the McGrews have in mind in terms of inference forms that are justification-preserving will also preserve this connection.

4.4 McGrew's Fatal Dilemma

In the earlier work,²¹⁸ Tim McGrew argues that at least one reason for thinking that incorrigibility is necessary for justification is that anything less than incorrigibility is susceptible to a fatal dilemma. McGrew calls a view that allows for some fallibility *moderate foundationalism*, as opposed to his *strong foundationalism*. Whatever basic beliefs there are, in order for them to be basic, they must not depend on any other belief for their justification. If the foundations are fallible and yet justified, then they have an epistemic

²¹⁷ McGrew and McGrew (2006), p. 40.

²¹⁸ The following arguments come from Tim McGrew's earlier work. So though I believe Lydia McGrew currently shares these views, since she was not part of the publication of the material I will be discussing, I will, from this point on, be addressing Tim McGrew alone.

probability of something less than 1. The question is how a belief comes to have a less-than-certain probability? There must actually be a probability relation that holds between some body of evidence and the proposition believed. This sets up the fatal problem. If the propositions believed are merely probable then they must be probable given some more fundamental body of evidence or background knowledge. However, if this is right then the justification is derived in part by other beliefs and thus the less-than-certain beliefs are not basic after all. McGrew concludes that if a belief is basic, it is not merely probable. Or if it is merely probable, it is not basic. So either way, according to McGrew, moderate foundationalism has a fatal problem. Thus, if one is to be a foundationalist, McGrew thinks that certainty is required at the foundations of justification.

It is worth reflecting on the way in which McGrew generates the problem here. Central to McGrew's allegation is that "mere probability" (where he means something less than probability 1) is relative to other beliefs. This is because, McGrew says, probability holds between propositions. So if a belief has mere probability, then the probability must be due to some other believed proposition. This will of course be an untenable position for any foundationalist who thinks of basic beliefs as merely probable, in McGrew's sense. The question is whether there is any other sense in which a belief may be merely probable where the probability is not owed to other beliefs.

McGrew does not say a lot in terms of arguing for the contention that mere probability only holds between believed propositions. What he does say is the following:

No proposition has an epistemic probability which is greater than zero but less than one in strict isolation; all judgments of intermediate epistemic probability or likelihood are implicit relational propositions of the form $P(h/e) = n$ (i.e., the probability of h *given the evidence* e is n).²¹⁹

McGrew also cites C.I. Lewis' famous dictum "If anything is to be probable, then something must be certain"²²⁰ as a firm confirmation of McGrew's contention about the need for incorrigible foundations. The thought is that if a belief is probable, then, at bottom, there is belief that is certain (or incorrigible) that is responsible for the belief being probable.

James Van Cleve considers a place where Lewis considers and rejects the notion that some statements enjoy a degree of probability without that probability being due to statements of certainty. Unfortunately, Lewis takes this sort of response as something akin to defending a coherence theory which he says "repudiates the data of experience which are simply given."²²¹ Van Cleve opines:

...this suggests that Lewis's quest was not for certainty *per se*; it was for pieces of evidence that stand on their own. But since he believed that only what is certain can stand on its own, he sought certainty.²²²

²¹⁹ McGrew (1995), 64.

²²⁰ C.I. Lewis (1946), p. 186.

²²¹ Lewis (1973), p. 373.

²²² Van Cleve (1977), p. 327.

I am not sure if this is the correct characterization of Lewis' quest or not. But it does seem to me that we should consider what else can stand on its own in making probable a belief without repudiating the data of experience. In fact, we want to ask whether the data of experience, itself, (or the awareness of experience) could make probable a belief.

In considering some alternative views, McGrew looks at Paul Moser's view as an example of moderate foundationalism. In Moser's *Knowledge and Evidence*, Moser argues that the epistemic probability of one's basic beliefs may be derived from one's experience itself, the contents of which are nonconceptual and nonpropositional.²²³ Moser's thought is that, in experience, there will be these nonconceptual features of experience that attract the believing subject's attention. McGrew says:

The issue is made difficult by the fact that *ex hypothesi* Moser's nonbelief bases are items of which he is *aware*. This seems like a legitimate internalist notion, and it is tempting to extend credit to the attention attractors as internalist justifiers on this basis alone. But awareness must do more than guarantee (as it does for Moser) that the items in question exist; it must link up in an epistemically significant way to the knower's beliefs.²²⁴

McGrew goes on to say:

Suppose that, although we have our attention attracted by nonconceptualized features of our experience, our awareness of these features in no way enables us justifiably to believe that such features

²²³ See Moser (1989).

²²⁴ McGrew (1995), p. 77.

exist. Why, in this case, should they be treated as providing epistemic support for any belief?²²⁵

McGrew's worry is the same as the Sellarsian worry that we have encountered many times at this point. Why should features of experience, all by themselves, justify our beliefs? Moser, in effect, embraces the nondoxastic horn of the Sellarsian dilemma. Even with the believing subject's attention attracted to certain features of the experience, there is no awareness of the relation that holds between the belief and these features, as McGrew says, in an "epistemically significant way." The failure to do so would make it possible to construct an SPO for Moser's view.²²⁶

The upshot of this for McGrew is to say that the way to link a belief with experience in an epistemically significant way is by constraining basic beliefs to demonstrative beliefs. However, what McGrew fails to consider is whether there is any other way to form this link other than what Moser had proposed. So, though his argument against Moser hits its mark, it seems to me that McGrew thinks that we should therefore drop moderate foundationalism altogether.

However, might there be other facts in addition to the experience of which we are aware that would probabilify a belief? There does not seem to

²²⁵ McGrew (1995), p. 77.

²²⁶ I am certainly putting words in McGrew's mouth here. He does not mention anything about Sellars or the worry about a possible SPO. However, what he says is that experience would have no "credibility" on its own. It appears to me that this is at least parallel to the SPO worry.

be any formal contradiction in thinking of a noninferentially justified belief that is possibly false. It seems conceivable that we could have been so constituted such that when we have a certain experience x , we become acquainted with a further fact: x makes probable (though does not entail) p . If this were how we were constituted, then it seems that the belief that p would be both noninferentially justified and fallible without falling prey to McGrew's dilemma. So it does not appear that the contradiction is a logical one. The problem is that we are not, as an actual matter of fact, aware of the probability relation it seems me, even if it were to hold between an experience and a possibly false belief.

I would agree with McGrew in thinking that a probable belief is probable in relation to some set of evidence. But, along the lines of Moser, I think that a state not constituted by further judgments could stand as justifying evidence for a noninferentially justified belief. But it of course cannot be the sensation all by itself. The view I have defended is that when one is not only directly aware of the character of one's experience but also directly aware of the fit that holds between a judgment about the character of the experience and the experience, then the judgment is justified noninferentially. I have claimed that one is aware of what this judgment has going for it, namely, its fitting the experience of which one is directly aware. So if I am in pain and I judge myself to be in pain and I am quite aware, as I am in most situations, of the relation of fit that holds between this judgment

and the pain, then I have epistemic assurance for my belief. This seems to be a belief that is made probable by one's awareness of these facts without requiring a more fundamental and certain belief.

Could the belief that I am in pain be wrong? Though it seems unlikely for us, it is possible that I could be wrong. In fact it seems quite possible that I could mischaracterize my sensation as pain, when it is something else. I could be told that I am in pain and, though I would no doubt be acting quite gullibly, I could believe it on that basis and be wrong. Or suppose one inadvertently placed one's hand on a kettle that one presumed was hot, one might believe, just for a moment, that one was in pain though the kettle turned out to be cool to the touch. So this belief is certainly not incorrigible in McGrew's sense. It is unlikely that one would get it wrong but there is nothing like entailment guaranteeing success.

I am not at all sure what McGrew would say here since he does not address of a view such as this. The belief, when justified in the above way, is clearly fallible and yet it is not due to any more fundamental belief or judgment. So it seems to me that we do have judgments that are probable without something being certain. It is true that nothing is probable unless something makes it probable. Again, it is not probable in isolation, but is probable relative to the evidence I have specified above.

4.5 Demonstrative Beliefs?

I have argued that in order to block the Sellarsian dilemma, one must require direct awareness of the relation that holds between the judgment and justifying state and McGrew has no such requirement. This could constitute a counterexample to this sort of requirement. So before leaving our consideration of McGrew, let's address whether demonstrative beliefs are sufficient for epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective.

There is tension in McGrew's view of noninferential justification. Periodically he slips in some positive and substantive characterization of the phenomenal state in describing the sort of beliefs he has in mind; beliefs which he takes to be incorrigible. At other times, he is content with the "I am experiencing this," which seems devoid of any substantive characterization of the phenomenal state.

During the course of defending his account from various objections, McGrew concedes that many of the judgments about our experience involve comparing the current state to past experiences. However, he does not think that all judgments could be comparative. McGrew says:

There must be a *first* cognitively significant experience, and if later comparisons are possible at all then it must be possible to assign to this first one some sort of description, even something as vague as "that unpleasant smell," in a noncomparative way.²²⁷

The problem for McGrew is that if the first cognitively significant experience is described as "that unpleasant smell," then this is not incorrigible. The

²²⁷ McGrew (1997), p. 229.

demonstrative “that” guarantees reference when it is directed at one’s experience but there is nothing that *guarantees* the characterization of the experience. It seems to me quite possible that I could be experiencing, say, an intensely sweet smell that I momentarily mistake as unpleasant.

Again, we do not, when our faculties are all functioning properly, often get these sorts of judgments wrong but McGrew need more than this since the definition of incorrigibility includes a modal operator. When a belief is incorrigible it is *necessarily* the case that, if one believes that p, then p is true. It would have to be the case that I could not possibly characterize an experience as an unpleasant smell and get this wrong but this seems plainly false. It seems to me that if there is any characterization of the phenomenal state, then the belief is not incorrigible as McGrew defines incorrigibility.

So McGrew needs noninferentially justified beliefs to be *purely* demonstrative if they are to be incorrigible. It must be “I’m experiencing this” or perhaps Chalmers’ “this, whatever it happens to be.”²²⁸ The problem here is that, being devoid of any substantive characterization of the state, McGrew gets his incorrigibility but at the price of triviality. A purely demonstrative belief being true does not seem to confer any advantage on one’s overall cognitive situation. One still must represent some judgmental characterization of the nature of the experience and it is not clear how the trivially true “this is that” is helping make the eventual characterization more likely. This would be akin to being surrounded by objects and as one

²²⁸ Chalmers (2003), p. 227

randomly directs one's finger somewhere saying "I am pointing at *that*." Until one represents what it is one is pointing at, this judgment, though necessarily true, is not going to do one much good in figuring out what the "that" is.

So I think that requiring strict entailment is unnecessary in making the truth connection. I would like to suggest that the relation of fit appropriately loosens the connection in allowing for the possibility of error. In the next section, I will propose some ways in which a belief may fit a state where the fit is something less than correspondence.

4.6 Fit as Degreed

Philosophers have often found it quite intuitive that noninferential justification admits of degrees. However, it is not often that this issue is explored. In the following, I will suggest some ways in which such an exploration might go. One caveat is that I do think we typically get our judgments about the phenomenal character of our sensations correct. This is because, for mature cognizers, much of experience is familiar. We have no problem discriminating the character of our experience, at least in more or less general ways. However, there is a strong intuition that it is, in principle, possible to, at times, get these judgments wrong. So it is worth exploring ways in which this may occur.

I have characterized fit as correspondence or something near enough. When a judgment fails to enjoy correspondence but "almost" corresponds,

then it is, strictly speaking, a false belief. However, intuitively there is something good, epistemically speaking, about a belief that stands in a relation of near correspondence, especially when one is aware of its fitting in an approximate sense. If this discussion wasn't already metaphorical enough, let me offer a *very loose* analogy. The epistemological enterprise is a little like playing darts. The goal is to hit the small center of the dart board. Still, a good dart throw is one that hits close though it may fail to hit the bull's eye. This, of course, is only meant to illustrate the thought that close counts in some domains. It seems to me that it's hard to shake the intuition that close counts for justification. That is, one could be rationally justified (even noninferentially) in believing that p even though, despite it all, p is false.

Consider the following example. Suppose that while one is completely unsuspecting, a bucket of cold water is dumped over one's head. It seems to me that there is often a moment of near terror in an experience of this sort. One might even, for a moment, judge oneself to be in pain. Let's suppose, however, that one was not actually in pain.²²⁹ However, this is an intense experience, one that approximates an experience of pain. The thought that I find intuitive is that one's characterization of the experience as pain is a rational judgment even though the judgment is, strictly speaking, false. It seems that one pretty quickly realizes what has occurred and realizes that

²²⁹ We could, of course, imagine a case in which one is in fact in pain from being doused in ice-cold water. However, the hypothetical case that we are imagining is one in which the water is cold enough to produce an intense experience that is just short of pain.

the characterization was not completely accurate. However, my contention is that, in that moment, one was directly aware of the fit (one was aware of the experience being something like pain) that held between the judgment and the experience, though the relation was something less than correspondence.

So when a belief fits a state and one is aware of this fit, then from the perspective of the believing subject, one is aware of the belief's being either true or close to it and this provides epistemic assurance. Suppose that I am being appeared to thirteen-speckledly and I make a judgment about the phenomenal character of this experience. If I am aware of the fit, then I am aware of this judgment's either corresponding or coming close to it. Suppose the belief is that I am being appeared to twelve-speckledly. This belief would of course be false but it seems rational given my awareness of its approximate fit. The phenomenal character of being appeared to twelve-speckledly is very similar to the phenomenal character of being appeared to thirteen speckledly. Of course, if I somehow was aware of the belief's failing to correspond, then getting close would not be of any epistemic good. However, the relation which I am imagining is one in which, from the perspective of the subject, the judgment could turn out to correspond. Given the awareness of fit, this belief seems more rational than the belief that I am being appeared to one-hundred-speckledly. Again, it seems to me that close counts for justification in a way that it doesn't for truth. So, when a belief fits some state, on my view, the belief has the following virtue: it is either

true or close to being true. It provides epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective since, crudely put, it stands a good chance of being true and one is aware of this in virtue of being directly aware of the fit.

Let's turn to some examples and attempt to illustrate what I have in mind by fit in general and specifically how a judgment can fit a state where the fit is something less than correspondence. In fact there will be more than one way in which a belief can fit a state though not in a correspondence sense. First, let's give some straightforward examples of fit:

1. The judgment that I am in pain fits the state of being in pain.
2. The judgment that I am being appeared to redly fits the state of being appeared to redly.
3. The judgment that the economy is recovering fits the state of economic recovery.
4. The judgment that God exists fits the state of God's existing.

These are all judgments that stand in a relation of correspondence, the upper limit of fit. We should notice that 3 and 4 do not involve phenomenal states. Because of this, though these do illustrate states standing in a relation of fit (here, correspondence) to a judgment, they will not figure into my account of noninferential justification. The reason is that I do not think that we are directly aware of the relation of fit in making these judgments. We might justifiably infer (or even come to have knowledge) that the relation of fit holds between, say, the judgment that the economy is recovering and the state of economic recovery. But this would obviously not amount to an instance of direct awareness. For me, beliefs that are not about one's

phenomenal states are not foundational for empirical justification for the simple reason that, unless a state is phenomenal, one's awareness of the state could not be direct. One's awareness will be mediated at least by sensation.²³⁰ And thus if one's awareness of the state is not direct, then one cannot be aware of the relation of fit.

All of the judgments in 1-4 are instances of correspondence. However, the following are examples of fit where the relation is something less than correspondence:

5. The judgment that I am being appeared redly fits (to some lesser degree) the state of being appeared to redish-orangely.
6. The judgment that I am being appeared to twelve-speckledly, fits (to some lesser degree) the state of being appeared to thirteen-speckledly.

These are both false judgments though intuitively these stand in a loose relation of fit since they are close to being correspondence. Take, for example, 5. Suppose we imagine a paradigmatic red that gradually shifts from being red to orange. There is some point at which the color is no longer red but it may not be orange either.²³¹ There will be some sensations of color in the gradation from red to orange where one might conceive of it as red where this would be false. However, the claim here is that it is still justified

²³⁰ Though I find this to be intuitively plausible on its face, a direct realist will of course disagree. Since this is not a project in the metaphysics of perception, addressing the direct realist alternative is outside the scope of the project.

²³¹ More precisely, there is a point at which one is being appeared to neither redly nor orangely.

on the basis of one's awareness of this more or less fit. It is certainly more rational than judging that I am being appeared to bluey.

The same goes for forming a belief about being appeared to twelve-speckledly. Let's change the example slightly to being appeared to twelve-dottedly. Consider the following array of dots:

.....

It seems to me difficult to discriminate the precise property being exemplified here though I am not even tempted to think that there are fifty dots, or thirty dots or three dots in my visual field.²³² However, if I were to form a belief about this number of dots, say, that I am being appeared to twelve-dottedly, I would be aware of my judgment being correct or close to it. It turns out that there are only eleven dots in this array. So the judgment would be false but I want to suggest that I was aware of the relation of fit, in that I was aware of my judgment's either corresponding or nearly corresponding.

Most of the examples that I have used up to this point have been very simple judgments about simple properties exemplified in experience.

However, as I mentioned in chapter 3, I think that in typical experience we rarely take the time to apply phenomenal concepts to the simple individualized properties exemplified in the experience. Instead, we make complex conceptual judgments about the character of our experience. The

²³² I would of course need to translate this talk into conceiving of the character of my experience (e.g., when being appeared to eleven-dottedly, I am not tempted to judge that I am being appeared to fifty-dottedly, etc.) rather than making judgments about dots on a page.

example that I have used above is making a conceptual judgment about the experience as of a tree. If I am having an experience of this sort, I don't typically first judge that there is a green patch framed by some background, make another judgment about a narrow brown patch (say, the tree's trunk), then make a judgment about what sort of shape is before me before inferring a more complex judgment about the overall experience. Rather I seem to possess a concept of what it's like to have an experience as of a tree that is, in some way, composed of these simpler properties. When I have an experience of this sort I seem to just conceive of the experience straightaway as a tree-experience.

If it is possible to have more complex conceptual judgments, then presumably there are more ways in which the judgment may go wrong. However, the judgment may still fit. Perhaps the experience is not an experience as of a tree but is an experience as of cleverly disguised phone tower made to look like a tree. Of course, at a certain distance, these experiences would be the same. When we are far enough away, the experience as of a cleverly disguised phone tower would just be an experience as of a tree. However, I am supposing that if one were right up close to the object, this would cease to be an experience as of a tree. There might be wires coming from what looked like the tree branches from far away and bolts that are painted brown to look like they are part of the tree trunk. My thought is if one were to start a certain distance away and proceed to get

closer, there would be a series of intermediate experiences where the experience ceases to be an experience as of a tree. However, the judgment of being appeared to in a tree sort of way may still fit. As one gets closer, the judgment fits less and less.

Let me make a final suggestion about how a judgment may fit a state without corresponding. However, in order to motivate the claim, it is important to talk about the distinction between determinate properties and determinable properties. The determinate/determinable distinction is a distinction between properties that stand in a genus/species relation. 'Being red' is a determinate property of the determinable 'being colored.' There are, of course, other determinate properties for the determinable being colored, however, being red is just one of these. A determinate property (e.g., being red) is also a determinable property for a property that is more determinate still (e.g., being crimson). Consider the following:

7. The judgment that I am being appeared to redly fits the state of being appeared to crimsonly.

Arguably, being aware of this relation would still entail a true judgment. The belief that I am being appeared to redly is made true by a state of being appeared to crimsonly, since crimson is a species of red.

What I would like to suggest is that the following may be true as well.

8. The judgment that I am being appeared to crimsonly fits the state of being appeared to redly.

The thought is that one may be justified with something short of correspondence when one is aware of the determinable property but judges that a slightly more determinate property is instantiated given an awareness of the relation of fit. So, if one were to be directly aware of being appeared to redly and one were to judge that one was being appeared to crimsonly, this would be a justified belief given that the judgment is guaranteed to be either correct or close to correct. The objective likelihood is guaranteed given the awareness of the determinable property and one would be aware of the judgment corresponding to something that falls under that determinable. The closer the determinate property is to the determinable will affect the degree fit. So if I am aware of being appeared to many-speckledly, it seems to me that this does not license the judgment that I am being appeared to twelve-speckledly. However, there may be times in which I am directly aware of being appeared to less-than-ten-speckledly and I make a more determinate judgment. It seems to me that this could be a rational judgment.

In fact I think that this is one way in which we may learn and develop our concepts. We make more fine grained judgments that go beyond what we are directly aware of and, in a way, familiarize ourselves with complexities. We might even be able to eventually be directly aware of the correspondence that holds between our judgment and our phenomenal states. The classical music novice would perhaps have direct awareness of some degree of fit that

holds between his judgments and his phenomenal states about the character of his auditory experience. However, the master composer would perhaps be aware of a far higher degree of fit (perhaps correspondence) in characterizing her experience.

In summary, these ways of standing in a relation of fit all seem to connect the relevant belief with the truth, though it is in a way much weaker than strict entailment. When one is directly aware of this relation, then one is aware of what the belief has going for it. This will not always be correspondence but, as I have argued, this seems to track with our intuitions about cognitive experience. Though we often get these judgments right, it is possible (and probably actual) that we from time to time we are mistaken in our representation of experience despite the judgment's being justified.

CHAPTER 5: OBJECTIONS

A primary objective of this project has been to offer a solution to the Sellarsian dilemma which has been persistently raised as a problem for foundationalism, and especially the internalist foundationalist. However, I have also taken the opportunity to defend an epistemological view of noninferential empirical justification as a plausible way to live with the constraints inherent within the solution to the dilemma. In this concluding chapter, I will consider some objections that apply to the view that I have defended. I think that these present some more or less salient difficulties. The view's ability to respond to these difficulties I take to be a virtue of the view.

5.1 Over Intellectualizing?

Classical foundationalists have sometimes posited so-called "introspective beliefs," which were really just beliefs about one's sense experience. On some views, these constitute the foundations of noninferential empirical justification. A standard sort of objection to classical foundationalism is that we rarely engage in introspection about the contents of our experience. The objector will point out that it is not as though when one sees a tree, one first *introspects* about the character of one's experience, forms introspective beliefs about the features of the experience, and then infers from these that there is an external world tree. This, it is charged, would be to over-intellectualize ordinary instances of cognition. The claim is

that we often move directly from the having of an experience to forming beliefs about the external material world. So the anti-foundationalist objection is that if the justification of our ordinary beliefs about the external world depends upon having justified introspective beliefs and if we don't typically have introspective beliefs much less justified ones, then we face the specter of skepticism vis-à-vis our ordinary beliefs.

The classical foundationalist has more than one way to respond to the over-intellectualization objection. For one thing, the foundationalist need not be committed to the idea that, as a matter of actual fact, knowing subjects engage in the introspective beliefs so long as it would be possible for one to do this. The thought is that one *could* reflect on the character of one's experience and form beliefs that are noninferentially justified in the way that that has been proposed. Although I think that this response may have some promise for blocking this objection, I will offer what I take to be a more interesting response. I will claim that we are indeed making these judgments about the character of our experience, though we are often inattentive to making them. I will claim that we are inattentive since the judgments are so mundane and pervasive in the having of experience.

The first thing to say is that crucial to the objection is the contention that we do not in typically form judgments about the character of our experience. This is usually stated *sans* argument, as if it is undeniably the case. But judgments can be subtle things. It seems to me that that we may

not explicitly *notice* ourselves making beliefs about our experience in many cases, but it, of course, does not follow that we do not make these judgments. It is obvious enough that, in most instances, we do not pause and engage in reflective introspection, thought of as an overtly deliberative process, with respect to our occurrent experiences, before forming our beliefs about the external world. Though we could form introspective judgments in this sense, it is decidedly not the sort of judgment making that I have in mind.

The other problem is that whether we do or do not form beliefs about the character of our experience is an empirical matter, and so the argument is, in a way, taken out of the realm of philosophical reflection. However, since I do think that we make these subtle judgments about the character of our experience, I owe it to the reader to at least motivate the claim. The best we can do here is to argue for the phenomenological plausibility of the claim that we do in fact make judgments about our experiences before forming beliefs about, say, the external world. Also, towards this end, I will offer an explanation for why it is often thought (mistakenly, on my view) that we *don't* make judgments about the character of our experiences.

One reason for thinking that we do in fact make judgments about the character of experience is that one might think that, intuitively speaking, we enjoy epistemic assurance with respect to many of our ordinary beliefs. This is to say that there is a strong intuition that thoroughgoing skepticism is implausible in its own right. If this is right, then, as I have argued, if one's

view (about empirical justification) is to survive the Sellarsian dilemma, then we need to find in cognitive experience an epistemic relation that holds between a judgment and the character of our experiences; an epistemic relation of which we are directly aware. It seems very plausible that there is some way in which sense experience links up, in an epistemic way, with beliefs about the external world but, at the same time, it has seemed to me implausible that we can be *directly aware* of whatever relation that this is. One might think that there is a probability relation that holds between, say, the character of the experience as of a tree and the external world belief about a tree. I am not sure how the sensation itself could make probable the belief that is about something radically different from it ontologically.²³³ This at least motivates the thought that perhaps the link is more complicated and what goes on in cognitive experience is more subtle than the idea that we just simply form beliefs about the external world directly on the basis of our sensations. To think otherwise *under-intellectualizes* cognition.

One way that I find plausible for understanding what intermediate steps might be involved in forming beliefs about the external world is that we first make sense of the character of our experience. We first represent the character of experience in thought in more or less complex ways. There is a certain characteristic “what it’s like” to have an experience as of a tree. The thought is that in order for the awareness of this experience to stand in a

²³³ One might think that the sensation, in a way, represents there being a tree. I will address the representationalist view in the next section.

logical relation to a belief it must be represented in thought in a justified way.

Now it seems to me that we owe the reader an explanation for why the most common response to classical foundationalism is the claim that we do not form beliefs about the character of experience. Robert Audi has posed the objection this way:

We do not, for instance, normally ask people for reasons to think it is raining when they can see clearly out an unobstructed window and say that it is; and if a person should give a reason, "I see it" is usually as good as any. *Prima facie*, in accepting it we are accepting an experiential, not an inferential, ground.²³⁴

Again, I would agree that it is quite implausible to think that we pause and engage in deliberative introspection before forming our beliefs about the external world. However, I doubt that many classical foundationalists have thought that we do. We do just typically say "I see it" and this is good enough at least for conversational purposes.²³⁵ However, what gets a pass in conversation is philosophically irrelevant to what a fundamental state of cognition amounts to.

As philosophers, we sometimes have the tendency to single out and deliberate over a belief in isolation, as to whether it is rational to believe or

²³⁴ Audi (1999), p. 210.

²³⁵ Though I think that this "conversational test" is irrelevant to our theorizing about something like justification, it is important for motivating a view that we say why one does tend to respond this way. I will say below that it is the great subtlety of the conceptual judgments that I have in mind that explain why most people respond this way. It is not that these judgments are made deliberately since I doubt very much that most folks have taken the time to reflect on what justifies their belief that it is raining outside when they see it is raining.

not. We can fall into a trap of thinking that typical beliefs are this way.

However, it seems to me that a very small minority of our actual beliefs are explicitly deliberated over. We very often take it all in stride, as it were, and can be simply inattentive to the fact that we have so believed. So the mistake in posing the over-intellectualization objection is that one is only thinking of deliberative beliefs.

So I can agree with Audi's assessment that in accepting the "I see it" as a reason for the belief that "we are accepting an experiential...ground."

However, it seemed to me that we use the term "experience" ambiguously.

We sometimes mean for it to include conceptualized experience (what I have been calling "cognitive experience") and sometimes we (mostly philosophers) mean for it to exclude any cognition (what I have called "sensation"). Where I do not agree with Audi is when he says that the experiential ground does not constitute an *inferential* ground. In order for the experience to be "grounds" for the belief, I have argued that we must apply concepts to the character of experience. My contention has been that the experience could not justify the external world belief straightaway. This is where I agree with Sellars in thinking that it is simply a myth to think that experience all by itself can stand in justificatory relation. Instead the experience must be justifiedly conceptualized. If constitutive of the experiential grounds is a judgment, then the justification for the belief that it is raining outside crucially depends

upon the justificatory status of the conceptual judgment. Thus, the belief that it is raining outside is inferentially justified if it is justified at all.

Why do so many think that we do not make judgments about the character of experience? It is that these judgments are extraordinarily subtle and ultra-mundane. The moment we open our eyes, or have any experience whatsoever, there can be a constant stream of these judgments. The claim is that we often fail to have the meta-awareness that we are making these judgments. We just go about conceiving on the fly, as it were.

Moreover, I have argued that these judgments are different from other more “ordinary” judgments. The conceptual judgments I have in mind are extra-linguistic in these sense that one needs not possess language relevant to the concept in order to possess the concept. Recall how Sosa defined a phenomenal concept. He said:

Thicker perceptual concepts go beyond thin indexical ones at least in requiring some ability to recognize the commonality in a diversity of items that co-exemplify some feature. Possession of such a perceptual concept would involve sensitivity, when appropriately situated, to the presence or absence of that feature.²³⁶

Sosa emphasizes the fact that we do not have the ability in language to express to ourselves the character of which we are conceiving. The character is phenomenal. So what I want to suggest is that we do not often notice ourselves making these judgments given the *ineffable* nature of these phenomenal concepts. Furthermore, they are so engrained and pervasive in

²³⁶ Sosa (2003), p. 125.

our cognitive life, from the subjective perspective, these judgments are just part of the mechanics of the cognitive experience. So rather than over-intellectualizing here, my claim is that these judgments are exceedingly mundane phenomenologically. In fact, they are so mundane that we rarely attend to the fact that we are making them.

The early BonJour employed the notion of *grasping* or *apprehending* the sensuous character of the experience as opposed to the sensuous character merely existing in experience. Bergmann talks about *conceiving of* the object of awareness as being relevant to the truth or justification of the belief as opposed to mere nonconceptual awareness. Sosa talks about noticing-awareness as opposed to mere experiential-awareness. These all have a very similar application, namely, they all play a role in many of the token instances of the Sellarsian dilemmas. Understood at least one way, these are all ways in which it is asserted that we make conceptual judgments about our experience prior to forming the beliefs that are alleged to be based directly on experience. This would be the antecedent of the doxastic horn of the dilemma.

Since these philosophers are offering dilemmas, they, of course, need not be committed to the existence of the states which serve as the antecedent of the conditional in one of the horns of the dilemma. However, it does seem to me that the arguments made by these philosophers are especially compelling given the plausibility of the notion that we subtly conceive of our

experience. The consequence of an embrace of this notion is that the belief that was taken to be basic is not basic after all. Instead the regress of justification lives on. My contention is that this is right but the regress does not live on for long as it terminates with these conceptual judgments given the fact that we are directly aware of the fit that holds between them and the properties exemplified in the experience. The thought is that we need not further conceive of the experience in order to apply a concept given our awareness of fit. To think so, beyond the regress worries already mentioned, would be to over intellectualize cognition to be sure.

5.2 Experience as Representational?

It is sometimes claimed that experience itself is conceptual. The following is a clear statement of this view:

Perceptual experience does not consist in a mere passive reception of sensations which come ready-marked with their identities and interrelationships. A child sees an animal, where we see a camel, and a biologist might see a dromedary. I see a Picasso, you see the work of someone obsessed with blue; I hear noise, you hear a composition by John Cage. Thus, the content of our perceptual experience is, surely to some extent, structured by the conceptual resources which we possess. But to what extent?...the view, which I will call the “conceptualist” view, that the possession of concepts is a necessary condition of all perceptual experience...there is no identifiable “pure perceptual” element in perception, which is independent of the mind’s conceptual ordering.²³⁷

One might challenge what I have said in this project by saying that there need be no direct awareness of fit that holds between conceptual judgments

²³⁷ Runzo (1982), p. 205. I was led to this passage by Alston (1998).

and the phenomenal character of experience because experience shows up in a conceptual mode already. In other words, to be directly aware of x being F is necessarily a conceptual matter and thus there is no need to form judgments about the character of experience much less be aware of the fit of these judgments.

The argument for there being a nonconceptual element in experience (contra the conceptualist) is to first imagine an ordinary experience. Let's imagine one is having a visual experience as of a red, ripe tomato. Now strip away everything for us as properly functioning mature cognizers that would be conceptual and judgmental. We can imagine someone with cognitive deficiencies or a newborn infant who has yet to develop the relevant concepts but that is still presumably having a visual experience with respect to the tomato. If we imagine a subject without any relevant concepts at all, whatever is left over from stripping experience of its conceptual character is the nonconceptual component of ordinary experience.²³⁸ My contention is that what is left over is the raw sensation that I have characterized as phenomenal properties exemplified in the experience. The conceptualist answer is that there is *nothing* left over. To think that there is nothing left over from this conceptual stripping strikes me as implausible. It looks to all the world that a baby is having an experience of a sort when she is before a red, ripe tomato though she lacks the concept of a tomato or even the

²³⁸ Dretske gives an argument similar to this. He calls what's leftover the sensory core. However, Dretske thinks that what's leftover is "seeing the tomato," as opposed to the phenomenal sensations. See Dretske (1969), p. 75.

concepts of redness and ripeness. Moreover, it seems that we have sensations or at least elements to the sensation that we never conceptualize or notice. If this is right, then there is at least a component in the experience that is nonconceptual.

Central to the conceptualist defense is pointing out how two individuals can have an experience of presumably the same thing but have different experiences with respect to it. Runzo's charge that the child sees an animal rather than a camel or a dromedary is an example of this. On one understanding of this, the charge seems plainly false. A newborn baby or a hypothetical observer who for whatever reason fails to have the concept of a camel can still see a camel (or dromedary for that matter) though one has no idea of what one is seeing. There is no intensional fallacy when it comes to seeing as there is with, say, believing.²³⁹ The infant, however, would not see it *as* a camel or *as* a dromedary if she lacks these concepts. If this is what is meant, then this does suggest a conceptual difference at some level. However, it doesn't follow that the experience itself is conceptual in conceptualist's sense.

To some degree, I think that this debate is terminological. In chapter 2, I made the distinction between *sensation* and *cognitive experience*. On my view, sensation is nonconceptual and noncognitive in the sense that it need

²³⁹ The intensional fallacy is when one substitutes identical objects in an intensional context. For example, from the fact that S believes that x is a dromedary, and since dromedaries are camels, it would be a mistake to conclude that S believes that x is a camel. S may not know that dromedaries are camels and thus the conclusion would not follow.

not be represented or characterized in thought in order for one to be aware of it. This is what the child presumably has when a camel is before her in clear sight. Sensation has a structure (i.e., its phenomenal character) in the sense that there are properties exemplified and its structure could be conceptualized as being some way or other. But, by itself, it is not propositional in the sense that it is neither true nor false. It is just the raw feel of an experience. Cognitive experience, by contrast, occurs when concepts are applied to the sensation. That is, one not only has sensation but one represents that sensation being some way or other in thought in order to make sense out of the blooming buzzing confusion that is the raw sensation. So the conceptualist might just be thinking of what I am referring to as cognitive experience as experience *per se*. By contrast, the nonconceptualist may be focused on this nonconceptualist component, the sensation.

I take this distinction to be very intuitive and phenomenologically plausible. It is, however, not without its critics. Beyond the radical conceptualist like Runzo, there are representationalist theories of perception. The representationalist might not think that experience is conceptually structured but would assert that the character of experience need not be represented in thought since it already shows up in a representational mode. That is to say that there is a “content” to experience and the content is, by nature, representational. The experience comes to us representing the world being some way or other. The representationalist will even think of

perception itself as having a truth value or at least something analogous to a truth value. A hallucination is representational too, on this view, but it misrepresents or is a *false* representation of reality. Michael Huemer states:

The foregoing reasons for accepting that a perceptual experience has [representational] content also support the thesis that this content is *propositional*. By that, I mean it is something that is either true or false—a perceptual experience represents something *to be the case*. A perceptual experience might have as its content a proposition like [that there is a red, round thing in front of me].²⁴⁰

One thing to say here is that it would be nice, in some ways, if the representationalist view was right. It would be much easier or at least simpler to stave off the skeptic if essential to experience was the representation of the external world. We could easily identify an epistemic relation that held between the judgments about the external world and the way the experience is representing the world to be. They are both propositional states, on this view, with presumably the same proposition. So when one believed that there is a tree before one on the basis of the experiential representation of there being a tree and if one is aware of the match between the propositional content of the belief and the experience, one would have epistemic assurance with respect to this judgment. The problem here is that I do not find the view at all plausible.

It seems to me that despite some rhetorical advantages, the representationalist view suffers from a profound problem. If a discrete experience is, by itself, either true or false, then it is unclear how it can

²⁴⁰ Huemer (2001), p. 74.

provide justification without itself requiring justification in the way required by the foundationalist. We will want to know what reason one has for taking the experience as a veridical one in forming a belief on the basis of it. If it requires further justification then it can't be a state or constitutive of a state that provides noninferential justification. When we form a belief we are representing the world as being some way or other. Beliefs need to be justified since the representation may be false. In fact, it may be wildly false. If experience is representational and may be wildly false in a similar sense, then it is unclear why we wouldn't need some reason for thinking that it is representing the world accurately.

Huemer addresses this objection. He seems to think that the only motive one would have in resisting the representationalist thesis is to stall the skeptic from exploiting the possibility of experience misrepresenting the world.²⁴¹ Huemer thinks that this is a shortsighted way of responding to the skeptic since the skeptic will not be stalled for long. Also if experience is not representational, then he thinks that it will be unclear how experience stands in a logical relation to beliefs. His thought seems to be that if experience is not representational, then it would be epistemically useless for standing in a justificatory relation to beliefs.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Huemer (2001), p. 72.

²⁴² Huemer will say later in his book that experience does not need to be justified since one would not be blamed for believing something on the basis of experience. So though he is not explicit about it, he seems to have a deontological notion of justification.

I am not sure that Huemer appreciates the skeptical worry here for the representationalist. It is not just the skeptical worry about the external world that is at issue. It is the much more radical skeptical worry that if experience does not in some way end the regress of empirical justification, then any empirically justified belief at all will require an infinite regress of justified beliefs. But since we can't form an infinite number of justified beliefs, then *all* empirical belief would be unjustified. This is a skepticism that is global in its scope.

Furthermore, even though sensation is not representational, I see no reason why it can't play a role in justifying our empirical beliefs. In fact, the acquaintance theorist's driving intuition is that there must be a confrontation with facts of which one is aware which do not admit of the need of further justification. As I have argued, it is ultimately the direct awareness of fit that terminates this regress of justification and blocks the SPO.

5.3 Basing?

One issue that has divided internalists and externalists in epistemology is what to say about the basing relation. Externalists will insist that an adequate theory of justification must not merely give an account of so-called *propositional justification* but must also give an account of what's referred to as *doxastic justification*. Propositional justification is usually understood as an account of what it is for there to be justification for believing that p. However, one could have propositional justification and not

even believe that p. Or it could be true that one believes that p but that one believes this on the basis of some epistemically irrelevant reason. There would still be the fact of there being justification for this person to believe that p even if they believe it on the basis of some other reason. Doxastic justification, on the other hand, is an account of a justified belief for a believing subject. An account of doxastic justification must include not only what it is for there to be justification for a belief that p but also what it is for the belief that p to be believed on the basis of the justification. This will of course require an account of the basis relation.

An objection that could be raised for my account is that direct awareness of fit is not necessary for securing epistemic assurance so long as the doxastic attitude is based on a state that fits the doxastic attitude.²⁴³ That is, an account of doxastic justification can secure epistemic assurance without requiring direct awareness of fit. The externalist form of such an objection does not get off the ground in the context of this discussion since the externalist will not require one to be aware of the justifier and thus there is no hope of epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective getting secured. So we will put this possibility aside.

What if the view was internalist and required that one's belief be based on the justification one has and one to be aware of this justifier? I think that this line of thinking is again misguided since to merely require the doxastic

²⁴³ I thank Todd Stewart for raising this objection at the joint meeting of the Illinois and Indiana Philosophical Associations in prepared comments on my paper presentation of some of this material.

attitude to be based on the justification does nothing to ensure that one is aware of the doxastic attitude's being so based. This changes nothing from the perspective of the believing subject in terms of epistemic assurance. It really just invites a Sellarsian dilemma with respect to the basing relation.

What if one required that the subject be aware of the doxastic attitude's *being based on* one's justification? I think that this is an interesting suggestion. To address it, we'll need to say more about the nature of the basing relation. Usually the importance of the basing relation is motivated by imagining two subjects with the same justification for a particular belief though with a difference in the bases of the beliefs. So suppose S1 is aware of being in pain and believes that he is in pain on the basis of the awareness of the pain. S2 is aware of being in pain but S2 gullibly believes he is in pain on the basis of reading a fortune cookie that told him he was in pain. Let's suppose, however, that both S1 and S2 are in pain and are aware of this fact too. It is claimed that both S1 and S2 have the same justification, in one sense, since they are both aware of the truthmaker of their belief, namely, the pain. However, one might think that S1 has doxastic justification (he has a justified belief), since his belief is properly based, while S2 is not *doxastically* justified. S2 is not in the worst possible epistemic situation since one might think that he does possess some sort of justification. He is better off than he would be in a case in which he had no awareness of being in pain. However, the justification is not the basis

of his belief. Insofar as S2 is justified, then he is only propositionally justified (he has justification to believe).

What does it mean to base one's belief on some state? This is a controversial matter. On one view, all this amounts to is that one's belief is *caused by* the relevant state.²⁴⁴ If this is the right and if one could be aware of this causal relation, then it still does not secure epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective. One could be aware of the belief that p, one could be aware of the state that makes the belief that p true, and one could be aware of the belief's being caused by the truthmaker without being aware of what the belief has going for it. Suppose we had the following conditions:

1. S believes that S is in pain
2. S is directly aware of being in pain
3. S is directly aware of the pain causing the belief that S is in pain.

The satisfaction of these conditions still do not entail that the subject would be aware of what the belief in 1 had going for it. Notice that the satisfaction of these conditions do not guarantee that one is aware of the pain having anything to do with the belief that one is in pain. This is because standing in a causal relation does not guarantee that the causal origin is epistemically relevant to the belief. One would still have to be aware of the causal origin

²⁴⁴ Paul Moser defends a causal account of basing, though his view is far more sophisticated than my statements here. For one, he thinks that the belief must be causally sustained by the justifying reason rather than merely being caused by the justifying reason. The difference is that I may have come to believe in the existence of God because of growing up in a religious household. However, I may have come to possess arguments for God's existence that now causally sustain my belief in God's existence. See Moser (1989), pp. 51-57.

being the truth maker or otherwise relevant to the epistemic status of the belief

It at least seems possible that the experience of pleasure could cause the belief that one is in pain and one could be aware of its being so caused by this state. One is in a defective epistemic situation to start with here but the point is that being aware of the causal relation does not seem to necessarily help (or hurt) the situation unless one was aware of the fit (or the lack thereof) between the belief and the state causing the belief.

One would have to be aware of the belief in 1 being *properly* based. What would this amount to? One would have to be aware of the basis of the belief being epistemically relevant to the belief. That is, one would have to be aware of the belief's being caused by a state and that this state would make the belief true or likely to be true. However, this is equivalent to requiring one to be aware of the epistemic relation that holds between the justifying state and the belief. But now we are back to my thesis. In order to secure epistemic assurance, even when one is aware of the causal relation, one must be aware of the epistemic relation, what I've suggested, for noninferential justification, is the relation of fit.

4.5 Access Internalism?

One might object that one does not truly secure epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective unless one is aware of the epistemic status of one's belief. That is, this desideratum is only achieved by *access internalism*.

The driving thought of access internalism is that in order to have epistemic assurance one would have to (or be able to) by reflection come to be aware of (or justifiably believe, or know) the satisfaction of the conditions of justification. This requires one to, in effect, move up a level and have meta-justification or at least meta-awareness with respect to the satisfaction of some or all of the object-level conditions. The thought is that unless one is aware of the satisfaction of the conditions of justification, then one will not be aware of what the belief has going for it. However, this would be a meta-requirement and meta-requirements of this sort almost always lead to regress worries. If we have to move up a level for justifying the object level, then it is unclear how this need will ever terminate for every new level.

Unfortunately, internalism *per se* has sometimes been equated with access internalism or sometimes the main motivation for internalism is identified as the motivation to have this privileged reflective position with respect to the epistemic status of one's belief. However, this is certainly a more ambitious thesis than the one that I have been defending since it is requiring awareness of the epistemic status as opposed to merely requiring the awareness of something that contributes to the justification. Consider the following definitions of internalism that amount to access internalism:

Internalism...treats justifiedness as a purely internal matter: if *p* is justified for *S*, then *S* must be aware (or at least be immediately capable of being aware) of what makes it justified and why.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Kent Bach (1985), p. 250. Quoted in Alston (1989), p. 212

We presuppose...that the things we know are justified for us in the following sense: we can know what it is, on any occasion, that constitutes our grounds, or reason, or evidence for thinking that we know.²⁴⁶

Every one of every set of facts about *S*'s position that minimally suffices to make *S*, at a given time, justified in being confident that *p* must be directly recognizable to *S* at that time.²⁴⁷

One form of access internalism that is echoed in the statements above is to require for noninferential justification that one be aware of the satisfaction of the necessary and sufficient conditions of noninferential justification. Requiring that the satisfaction of the necessary and sufficient conditions must be, in some sense, available to the subject will be a nonstarter. Say one posits the awareness of some property ϕ as a necessary condition for noninferential justification. This necessary condition has two parts. There must be an instance of ϕ and the subject must be aware of it. So, the awareness is as much a necessary condition as the property of which one is aware and, thus, one must be aware of the satisfaction of this condition (meta-level awareness now). It would be implausible though to require one to be aware of the awareness since there will be no stopping this regress. Every further level of awareness will require some further level of awareness. We do not typically get above the second level of awareness (awareness of being aware of ϕ) if we even get there.

²⁴⁶ Roderick Chisholm (1977), p. 17. Quoted in Alston (1989), p. 212.

²⁴⁷ Carl Ginet (1975), p. 34. Quoted in Alston (1989), p. 213.

Instead of actual meta-requirements, one could require the *possibility* of satisfying meta-requirements. Evan Fales has argued that the possibility of satisfying meta-requirements is necessary for a foundationalist account. Fales acknowledges that this will produce an infinite regress but he argues that the regress is benign.

Fales requires for noninferential justification what he calls *transparency* where a proposition is transparent when one can intellectually grasp the content of the proposition and, in the act of grasping the proposition, one thereby knows that the proposition is true.²⁴⁸ The truth of the proposition is in this way transparent to the believing subject. What sorts of propositions are transparent? Fales' discussion of some of these issues comes in the context of discussing *a priori* knowledge and justification. He uses examples of simple arithmetic and logic such as "1+1=2" and "if the disjunction (P or Q) is true and P is false, then Q is true." So a child could of course memorize the proposition 1+1=2 without it being transparent to the child. However, if 1+1=2 is transparent to someone this means that one has grasped the content in such a way that one sees that 1+1 does indeed equal 2. One understands infallibly the truth of this proposition. In this project, we have been primarily discussing empirical justification. Fales intends to use the *a priori* account as a model for how to understand empirical knowledge

²⁴⁸ Though Fales has a lot to say about transparency, he does not offer a concise definition of the term. Michael Bergmann formulates a clear definition taken from correspondence with Fales with his permission, in Bergmann (2006), p. 39. My statements here are a blend from both of these sources.

and justification. So, for the sake of simplicity, we will focus on his discussion of the *a priori*.²⁴⁹

Suppose that one grasped the simple arithmetic truth P and P is transparent for one. If one didn't also judge that P is transparent to one, then it being transparent would not constitute justification. Fales says:

Indeed, it seems that I *must* make such a judgment, for unless it is (sufficiently) transparent to me that my grasp of P is such as to make *its* content transparent, it is epistemically possible that the content of P is not sufficiently transparent to me in which case I lack a warrant for P.²⁵⁰

But this requirement iterates and will make way for an infinite regress of judgments. In order for the judgment that P is transparent to me to be justified, it also must be transparent to one. So the judgment that P requires the judgment that:

P*: P is transparent to me.

However, we will want to know what justifies P*. The claim is that P* is also transparent to one. But for this to make an epistemic difference, then one must judge:

P**: P* is transparent to me.

²⁴⁹ It seems to me to be much easier to understand “transparency” when it comes to *a priori* truths as opposed to empirical truths. Also since the empirical account is modeled on the *a priori* account, presumably, if it fails, then the empirical account is in trouble as well.

²⁵⁰ Fales (1996), p. 162.

There will be nothing that stops this regress and the judgments get more complicated as it iterates since each judgment gets embedded within the higher level judgment. For this reason, the regress purports to be vicious.

To assuage the worry here, Fales makes an interesting claim. He concedes that this does give way to an infinite regress but it need not be an actual infinite regress of meta-judgments in order for the object-level judgment to be justified. He says, in regards to the meta-judgment:

The required information is not distinct: the transparency (and truth-value) of the proposition that P* is transparent to me is not distinguishable from the transparency of P itself, in spite of the greater formal complexity of the latter proposition (call it P**).

He compares this to two other cases in which an iteration of ever increasing complexity does not stop one from agreeing to know the truth of all the iterations so long as one knows the truth of the object-level proposition. He points out that P & P & P has a greater degree of formal complexity than P & P or even just P but it is not as if we are at a loss to grasp the truth of the more complex proposition if we grasp the truth of the less complex P (and perhaps the notion of a conjunction). An even better example for Fales is the iteration of P is true. If one grasps the proposition P is true, then one should likewise grasp the proposition that *it is true that* P is true. If one grasps this, then one should grasp the proposition that *it is true that* it is true that P is true and so on for all iterations. He says:

Transparency, by its very character must (and does) have a kind of self-sufficiency. To be transparent is to be transparently so; were it otherwise, it would not be a case of genuine transparency.²⁵¹

Given the nature of transparency, one can always form the meta-judgment, for any level of the iteration. This further judgment will be as transparent as all the rest since its iterating is essentially trivial.

Since Fales, in effect, embraces Bergmann's strong awareness condition, Bergmann argues that, despite these claims, the resulting regress in Fales' account is in fact vicious.²⁵² Bergmann grants that these two examples might illustrate what it is for the possibility of forming infinitely many iterations of *these* propositions. However, they are relevantly disanalogous to Fales' view about transparency. The relevant disanalogy is that insofar as we are able to grasp the infinitely many iterations of these other propositions, these iterate in a trivial way.²⁵³ For example, P & P iterates simply because it is repeating the same thing. Its triviality is in the fact that it really isn't getting any more conceptually complicated. Likewise with it is "true that p." We don't seem to be saying anything different as we ascend the iterations. The formal complexity may just be a linguistic complexity since conceptually the proposition is not getting any more complex.

²⁵¹ Fales (1996), pp. 163-164.

²⁵² Bergmann's strong awareness is conceiving of the justification-contributor as being relevant to the truth or justification of the belief.

²⁵³ Bergmann (2006), p. 41.

This is in contrast to saying “it is transparent to me that P.”

Bergmann seems to think is conceptually different from “it is transparent to me that it is transparent to me that P.” Perhaps what Bergmann has in mind is the way that the iteration of knowledge, on many views, is not a trivial matter. Suppose that we leave aside the worries about Gettier cases and define knowledge as justified true belief. One might be tempted to think that knowledge can iterate. So if one knows that P then it should be possible to know that one knows that P. However, it has seemed to many that these two knowledge claims are nontrivially different in the sense that object-level knowledge does not entail the meta-knowledge. If one had a justified true belief that p, it is a much stronger claim to say that one knows (or has a justified true belief) that one has a justified true belief that P. One would somehow have to know that all of the conditions for knowing that P are satisfied for there to be meta-knowledge but this is not required nor entailed by having the object-level knowledge. One can satisfy the justification condition, for example, without having the justified true belief that the justification condition has been satisfied.²⁵⁴

Whether or not transparency iterates in a trivial way all depends upon how the notion is defined. Transparency does seem to me to be relevantly disanalogous to the first example of P & P. The way that this proposition

²⁵⁴ Of course, this is not Fales’ definition of knowledge since he requires infallibility for knowledge and he does think knowledge, on his definition of knowledge, iterates. My point here is to illustrate a way in which a concept iterates in a nontrivial and unobvious way.

iterates is not how transparency iterates since this seems to just trivially repeat. However, the second example (i.e., it is true that p) may not be so disanalogous since it is not merely repeating. The higher level proposition embeds the lower level proposition in the same way that transparency would. However, once we understand what it is to be true and we grasp the truth of P, we do seem to grasp the truth of the higher iterations. So if transparency is like this, then it may iterate in an essentially trivial way.

The problem, though, is why think that one must move to these higher level of meta-judgments. If the iterations of transparency are essentially trivial, then why is this helping us in an epistemic sense? Are we any more epistemically assured once we have run through a handful of trivial iterations? It seems not. I would like to suggest that the object level state is sufficient for epistemic assurance so long as one is directly aware of the proposition being transparent. That is, it seems to me that if one is directly aware of a proposition's being transparent, given the nature of transparency and its essential relation to truth, then one is thereby aware of what the belief has going for it. One is no better off, epistemically speaking, with respect to the object-level justification if one judges that one's grasp of a proposition is transparent when one is aware of its being transparent. Now Fales is trying to define warrant as it relates to knowledge. So perhaps he has an even more ambitious desideratum than the one I have identified. In any case, insofar as we are directly aware of a propositions being

transparent,²⁵⁵ it seems to me that we secure epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective without needing to judge that we've done so.

All I have in mind in satisfying the desideratum of epistemic assurance is that one satisfies the following condition: one is aware of what the belief has going for it. Recall that this is a state that blocks the SPO in all possible cases. This does not require moving up to a meta-level. Of course, one could typically reflect upon one's current epistemic situation and perhaps become aware of satisfying various conditions of justification. However, the point is that one need not do this to be justified.

²⁵⁵ This seems right for a priori justification, though dubious when it comes to empirical justification.

CONCLUSION

When faced with the potential of an infinite regress of justification, it is very intuitive to think that there must be *something* that terminates this chain of justification. It seems to me that the intuitive plausibility of foundationalism, broadly construed, is easy to motivate in this respect. However, the view is certainly not without its problems. The Sellarsian dilemma has been a persistent problem for the foundationalist showing up in a variety of forms sometimes with radically different views in mind. It has also seemed to me that the dilemma is rather effective against many of these views and its effectiveness has sometimes been underappreciated. In this project, I have tried to put into sharp focus just how effective it can be against a foundationalist picture.

I have argued that the Sellarsian dilemma is a profound problem if we think that the primary desideratum in doing epistemology is to secure epistemic assurance from the perspective of the believing subject. This desideratum is highly intuitive and is generally one that is only rejected once it proves to be too problematic, where the Sellarsian dilemma is one of those problems. However, I have argued that there is a way out for noninferential justification. The way out is to require, for noninferential justification, the direct awareness of the fit that holds between one's conceptual judgments and the character of one's experience. The claim is that this entails epistemic assurance from the subject's perspective.

Though I do think that this defeats a global skepticism, I want to be clear that we have not thereby defeated skepticism about the external world. I have said almost nothing about whether justification can transfer from these foundational beliefs about the character of experience to beliefs about material objects. The reason for this is that my primary interest here has been to take on the challenges that the Sellarsian dilemma presents. This is primarily a challenge to the foundations of justification.

So, though my task in the project has been limited in this way, I think that a plausible view has emerged that effectively solves the Sellarsian dilemma.

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