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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9c53104k>

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Publication Date

2022

DOI

10.4324/9781003008101-8

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FACTIVE REASONS AND PROPOSITIONAL JUSTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT. The *classical internalist account of justification* is outlined, which understands propositional justification, and thereby doxastic justification, in terms of the subject's non-factive mental states. A key rationale for the classical internalist account of justification, in terms of the *new evil demon intuition*, is explored. It is argued that thinking about the classical internalist account of justification at the level of reasons highlights some implausible features of it, while also indicating how one might accommodate the new evil demon intuition while nonetheless rejecting the classical account. In particular, it is argued that we should opt instead for the alternative, non-classical, internalist conception of justification that is offered by *epistemological disjunctivism*, which specifically allows that a subject's factive mental states can be relevant to her propositional justification.

0. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

My interest is in the internalist conception of propositional justification, where by this I mean an account of propositional justification that goes hand-in-hand with an internalist conception of doxastic justification. I take this to be any account of doxastic justification that is essentially concerned with reflectively accessible epistemic reasons. In addition, I will follow orthodoxy in treating propositional justification as fundamental in this regard, such that one defines doxastic justification in terms of propositional justification plus appropriate basing.¹ This commitment is significant because it is common to understand the internalist conception of doxastic justification in terms of the subject's non-factive mental states. Accordingly, if doxastic justification is just propositional justification plus appropriate basing, then it follows that the constituents of

propositional justification are also restricted to the subject's non-factive mental states. It is precisely this conception of propositional justification that I will be objecting to. In particular, I will be arguing that a better account of propositional justification, and thus doxastic justification, is available that allows a subject's factive mental states to be part of a subject's propositional justification. This is an account of propositional justification that goes hand-in-hand with *epistemological disjunctivism*.²

1. THE CLASSICAL INTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF JUSTIFICATION

Standard forms of epistemic internalism about doxastic justification understand the rational support that constitutes a subject's justification in terms of that subject's non-factive mental states, such as her beliefs and her experiences. We find this thesis in both mentalist and accessibilist versions of epistemic internalism. The former endorses this thesis directly by claiming that doxastic justification supervenes on the subject's non-factive mental states, while the latter endorses this thesis indirectly by claiming that subjects only have the special epistemic access that is relevant to doxastic justification with regard to their non-factive mental states.³ In both cases, the contrast is with epistemic externalist accounts of doxastic justification, such as process reliabilism, which allow facts about the world, such as whether a belief was formed via a reliable process, to have a bearing on the justification of the target belief.⁴

There are various rationales offered for why epistemic internalism incorporates this demand, but I want to focus on one overarching consideration in this regard, which is the so-called *new evil demon intuition*.⁵ This is the intuition that a subject and her envatted counterpart are equally justified in the beliefs that they form. The experiences had by the unenvatted subject are, *ex hypothesi*, indistinguishable from the experiences had by the envatted counterpart. Accordingly, as counterparts, both subjects will respond to these experiences in the same way, and hence form identical beliefs as a result on the very same basis. It seems to follow that these two subjects must share a justification for their beliefs, in the sense that if one of these subject's beliefs is justified, then the other subject's corresponding belief is also justified, and to the same degree. Moreover, if doxastic justification is just propositional justification plus appropriate basing, then sameness of doxastic justification appears to entail sameness of propositional justification too. After all, given that both subjects seem to be forming their beliefs on the very same basis, it is hard to see how a difference in propositional justification could possibly arise.

Epistemic internalism is held to be uniquely well-placed to accommodate the new evil demon intuition. Indeed, the new evil demon intuition was originally presented as an objection to

epistemic externalism (and hence in support of epistemic internalism).⁶ A process reliabilist account of doxastic justification, for example, seems to be in direct conflict with this intuition, given that the beliefs held by the subject and her envatted counterpart clearly differ quite dramatically in terms of whether they are reliably formed. Proponents of such a view are thus faced with the dilemma of either rejecting the intuition or finding some way of modifying the view so as to accommodate it.⁷

When it comes to epistemic internalism, in contrast, there doesn't seem to be any *prima facie* tension in play. In particular, epistemic internalism can accept this intuition as being straightforwardly true. Since the subject and her envatted counterpart share the same non-factive mental states, and form their beliefs in identical ways, it follows that they ought to be counterparts in terms of the doxastic justification that their beliefs enjoy.

Notice that it is crucial to epistemic internalism that it is the non-factive mental states that are relevant here, as clearly the subject and her counterpart do not share their factive mental states. Take a factive mental state like *seeing that p*, or *remembering that p*, where the mental state entails the target proposition. There will clearly be many factive mental states of this kind that will be possessed by the subject and not her envatted counterpart. For example, while the unenvatted subject, who has veridical perceptual experiences of the world around her, can count as seeing that such-and-such is the case, her envatted counterpart clearly cannot exhibit the same mental state, given that her perceptual experiences are not at all veridical. Nonetheless, the subjects will share their non-factive mental states, and in particular will share their experiences and beliefs about the nature of the world around them, and that is all that matters with regard to capturing the new evil demon intuition.⁸

Accordingly, epistemic internalism about doxastic justification is standardly thought to be solely concerned with the subject's non-factive mental states.⁹ Moreover, as we've already noted, sameness of doxastic justification in this case implies sameness of propositional justification too, and so we get the further claim that propositional justification is also to be understood in terms of non-factive mental states. This is a plausible way of thinking about propositional justification. Propositional justification is meant to be a kind of justification that is available to the subject to believe the target proposition, regardless of whether she in fact believes it, such that if she appropriately forms a belief on this basis then that belief is doxastically justified. If the subject's propositional justification concerns her non-factive mental states, then that would ensure that it is suitably available to the subject, given that we are held to have special epistemic access to our mental states.

We will call the thesis that doxastic and propositional justification are to be understood in terms of non-factive mental states in the manner just described the *classical internalist account of*

justification. While the classical internalist account of justification, and the new evil demon intuition that motivates it, is usually expressed directly at the level of justification, we can also express the view (and the new evil demon intuition too) at the level of the reasons that comprise this justification.¹⁰ Call the reasons that are the actual reasons for which a subject believes that *p* the subject's *motivational reasons*.¹¹ The upshot of the new evil demon intuition seems to be that the subject and her envatted counterpart form their beliefs on the basis of the very same reasons, but since they only share their non-factive mental states, this suggests that the motivational reasons must be concerned with such states. In any case, when one's motivational reasons are sufficiently good reasons (and whatever conditions required for appropriate basing are met), then one's belief will be doxastically justified.

Whereas a subject's motivational reasons are the reasons for which she believes, regardless of whether those reasons are of good epistemic pedigree, *normative reasons* are facts that constitute good epistemic reasons to believe a proposition, independently of whether anyone actually believes that proposition (*a fortiori*, whether anyone actually believes that proposition on this rational basis). Propositional justification is concerned with normative reasons. In particular, it is concerned with those normative reasons that are available to the subject, such that she could form a belief in the target proposition on this basis (which would in turn ensure that the very same reason is the subject's motivational reason).

Expressed in terms of the classical internalist account of justification, we thus get the idea of there being a sub-class of normative reasons that concern the subject's non-factive mental states. These are accessible to the subject, and so can constitute the subject's propositional justification for believing a target proposition. That the obtaining of such states can be normative reasons looks credible, since a subject's beliefs and experiences (non-factively understood) are often thought to provide good reasons for belief. Accordingly, if the subject appropriately forms her belief on the basis of the non-factive mental states that constitute the normative reasons, such that the normative reason is also her motivational reason, then her belief will be doxastically justified.

2. A NON-CLASSICAL INTERNALIST ACCOUNT OF JUSTIFICATION

I want to take issue with the classical internalist account of justification. My concern with the proposal is not the commitment to epistemic internalism that it incorporates, however.

Accordingly, I won't be defending an epistemic externalist account of propositional and doxastic justification instead. Rather, I will be arguing that there is a more plausible non-classical internalist

account of propositional justification available, one that isn't bound by the new evil demon intuition into thinking of the constituent normative reasons that propositional justification involves as being restricted to non-factive mental states. In particular, I will be arguing for a non-classical internalist account of justification that allows one's *factive* mental states to play the relevant rational role.

Defending such a position means accommodating the new evil demon intuition in such a way that it doesn't entail the classical internalist account of justification. In particular, it involves arguing that the subject and her envatted counterpart are not equally doxastically justified in their beliefs (though I will be claiming that there is a sense in which both beliefs are justified nonetheless). I will be suggesting, however, that there are independent grounds for not taking this intuition at face value. Moreover, I will be maintaining that one can motivate this alternative accommodation of the new evil demon intuition from *within* epistemic internalism.

We noted earlier that those who defend the new evil demon intuition can do so at the level of reasons, and that this involves claiming that the subject and her envatted counterpart share the same motivational reason. I think that it is entirely right that these subjects do share this motivational reason, but I don't think that the classical internalist account of justification correctly identifies what this is, and that this has a bearing on the question of whether the subjects are alike in terms of doxastic justification. Recall that one's motivational reason is the reason for which one actually believes the target proposition. The classical internalist account of justification takes it as a given that this reason is a non-factive mental state. This is certainly how they understand the doxastic justification that the subjects have in this case, as we noted above.

But notice how theory-driven this claim is. In particular, our everyday conception of reasons is not limited to non-factive mental states at all. In fact, we are normally only prompted to appeal to non-factive mental states as reasons when we have grounds to doubt the target proposition. Imagine, for example, that we have a subject in conditions that are entirely normal who believes that there is a computer in the room because that's what she sees, and who has no grounds to doubt what she sees. If this subject is asked why she believes that this is the case, wouldn't she naturally respond by appealing to a factive mental state, such as that she can see that there is a computer in the room? In contrast, if she did only appeal to a non-factive reason, such as by saying that it seems to her as if there is a computer in the room, wouldn't we take this to indicate that she has some grounds to doubt what she is seeing (which would thus be puzzling, given that the subject has been given no grounds for doubt)?¹²

This point is important since it indicates that the subject's motivational reason in normal circumstances is usually not a non-factive reason at all (i.e., a reason that concerns a non-factive mental state), but rather a factive reason (i.e., a reason that concerns a factive mental state). This is

problematic for the classical internalist account of justification since doxastic justification was meant to consist of the subject appropriately forming a belief in the target proposition on the basis of an accessible normative reason that consisted of a non-factive mental state, and hence a non-factive reason. But it seems that subjects do not normally form their beliefs on this basis at all, in which case it is not clear how, on the classical account, they are to form justified beliefs, given that doxastic justification is essentially concerned with the subject's motivational reasons.

With the foregoing in mind, suppose that instead of treating the subject's motivational reason—in normal conditions, where the subject is offered no grounds for doubt in this regard—as being a non-factive mental state we instead follow our everyday epistemic practices and appeal to a factive mental state instead. So our subject's motivational reason for believing that p , where p is some claim about her environment, is not that (say) it seems to her that p , but rather that she sees that p . Since seeing that p is evidently a good reason for believing that p (since it entails it), there can't be any dispute that this would constitute a normative reason in this regard. It is certainly a normative reason if the corresponding non-factive state is a normative reason. Given that the subject appropriately forms her belief that p on this basis, then, such that it is also her motivational reason, then we can capture her doxastic justification in terms of the possession of this factive reason. This way of thinking about doxastic justification, whereby one's factive mental states can function as the rational support for one's beliefs, is central to *epistemological disjunctivism*, though we are here extending this non-classical internalist account of justification to propositional justification as well.¹³

We noted earlier that the proponent of the classical internalist account of justification claims in response to the new evil demon intuition that the counterpart subjects believe what they do on the basis of the same motivational reasons. I agree that this is so, except that I would claim, for the reasons just noted, that the motivational reason common to both subjects is the factive reason concerned with the subject's factive mental state. In particular, since the two counterpart subjects have indistinguishable experiences, the envatted counterpart will also form her belief that p on the same factive basis. Of course, the envatted subject doesn't in fact see that p , but that needn't prevent this from being her motivational reason for believing that p . Moreover, she has been given no grounds for doubting the veracity of her experiences in this regard. Accordingly, if the motivational reason for the unenvatted subject's belief is that she sees that p , then that is also the motivational reason for the corresponding belief held by her envatted counterpart.

We've previously noted that motivational reasons can be good or bad from an epistemic point of view, as this is simply the name of the reason for which one believes as one does, and that might have no epistemic status whatsoever. What makes a motivational reason a good reason from

an epistemic point of view is whether it is also a normative reason with regard to the target proposition. If it is, and the subject appropriately forms her belief in the target proposition on the basis of this normative reason, such that it is also their motivational reason, then this can generate doxastic justification. This is why the unenvatted subject has a justified belief that p . But what should we say about her envatted counterpart whose motivational reason is also the factive mental state that she sees that p ?

Clearly the justificatory story just offered with regard to the unenvatted subject's belief is not applicable to her envatted counterpart, as the normative reason in question simply doesn't obtain. In particular, one cannot see that p if p is false. But even if by some quirk p happened to be true, it would still be the case that this normative reason doesn't obtain. As many commentators have noted, seeing that p involves more than just the truth of p , or even that one genuinely sees the objects at issue in p , as it captures an epistemic relationship that one stands in with respect to p , one that wouldn't be available to the subject in conditions where one is massively in error regarding one's perceptual environment.¹⁴ If the normative reason doesn't obtain, however, then it cannot be the source of doxastic justification for the subject. Accordingly, we are obliged on this proposal to deny that our counterparts are identical in terms of the doxastic justification they have for their beliefs, even though they are identical in terms of the motivational reasons that underpin these beliefs.

3. EXPLANATORY JUSTIFICATION AS A POSITIVE EPISTEMIC STANDING

Does this mean that allowing that our motivational reasons in good epistemic conditions can be factive mental states entails that we must completely reject the new evil demon intuition? I think that this would be too quick, for while epistemological disjunctivism, as a non-classical internalist account of justification, is committed to maintaining that the beliefs of the two subjects in this case are not alike in terms of doxastic justification, this is not the only way of accommodating this intuition (even if it is the most direct way of accommodating it). In particular, there is a justificatory story that the proponent of epistemological disjunctivism justification can offer with regard to the envatted subject's belief.

Compare motivational reasons with *explanatory reasons*. Whereas the former concerns the reason for which the subject believes as she does, the latter concerns the reason that we would offer to explain why she believes as she does. Often, the two will coincide, and I think it is common as a result for epistemologists to treat them as the same thing. Indeed, in normal conditions, the distinction between a motivational and an explanatory reason simply will not arise.

But there are important differences, and they come to light precisely in the kinds of cases that interest us, where agents are unbeknownst to them forming erroneous beliefs. In terms of our pairing of an envatted and unenvatted subject, for example, while they both share their motivational reasons for belief (since the envatted subject is unaware of their epistemic situation), they are distinct in terms of the explanatory reasons that apply in each case. In particular, we would not explain why the envatted subject believes that p by appealing to her motivational reason that she sees that p , since of course she doesn't see that p , and hence this wouldn't explain anything about why she believes as she does. The applicable explanatory reason would rather be the non-factive mental state that it *seems to her that p* . That is a fact, and it also explains why she would believe that p even though p isn't the case. It is not, however, her reason for believing that p . Explanatory and motivational reasons thus come apart.

This point is significant for our purposes as it enables us to offer a justificatory story regarding our envatted subject's belief, albeit not one that involves doxastic justification. For notice that the fact that it seems to a subject that p is a normative reason for believing that p . Moreover, we have already granted that a subject's non-factive mental states can be accessible normative reasons that can comprise that subject's propositional justification. It follows that in the kind of case where the distinction between motivational and explanatory reasons arises, which will essentially be cases where doxastic justification is lacking, it is nonetheless possible to appeal to a normative reason that is part of that subject's propositional justification to account for why an explanatory reason can confer a positive epistemic status on the target belief. Call this positive epistemic standing *explanatory justification*, as distinct from the doxastic justification that is applicable to the non-envatted counterpart (whose motivational reason aligns with a normative reason).

We can think of explanatory justification as a kind of epistemic charity. It is a mode of epistemic evaluation that only becomes relevant when doxastic justification is lacking. The idea is that we take a further step back in our epistemic evaluation of the subject's belief and consider whether there is an explanatory story available that accounts for why the subject believes as she does which aligns with an accessible normative reason. Explanatory justification is thus a secondary notion of justification, albeit one which mirrors in crucial respects the structure of doxastic justification.

Recall that doxastic justification involves a belief based on the propositional justification provided by the accessible normative reason. The motivational and accessible normative reasons thus need to align. Similarly, explanatory justification also appeals to the propositional justification provided by an accessible normative reason, albeit by appealing to the subject's explanatory reason rather than her motivational reason in this regard. For this secondary notion of justification, only applicable when doxastic justification is lacking, what is important is that the explanatory reason

and the accessible normative reason aligns.¹⁵

In this way, we can accommodate the intuition that both agents in the new evil demon case are justified in their beliefs, while also denying that they are alike in terms of doxastic justification. In particular, the two agents are not on an epistemic par with regard to their beliefs in the target proposition, as only the secondary, explanatory, notion of justification is applicable to the envatted subject's beliefs (and which, moreover, concerns a non-factive normative reason, as opposed to a factive one). Furthermore, as we have seen, what is crucial to recognising that there is this secondary notion of justification in play is to realise that while the subjects in the new evil demon case do share the same motivational reason, since that reason concerns a factive mental state, only the unenvatted subject has a belief that is in the market for doxastic justification.

That the subject's explanatory reason aligns with an accessible normative reason that comprises her propositional justification is thus one way of motivating the claim that explanatory justification is a *bona fide* positive epistemic standing, even if it is not a form of doxastic justification. We can further motivate this claim by contrasting cases of explanatory justification with cases where we aren't at all inclined to treat the subject's belief as justified. Such cases emphasise the point that while explanatory justification is not on a par with doxastic justification, it is a positive epistemic standing that contrasts with cases where justification is altogether lacking.

Suppose our subject's reason for believing that p is that this was predicted in the tealeaves. Now the motivational and explanatory reasons for this subject's belief don't line up at all with any normative reason, since the tealeaves don't offer any rational basis for the truth of the target proposition. In such a case, doxastic justification is lacking, in virtue of the motivational reason failing to be a normative reason. But there is also no explanatory justification either, as the explanatory reason and the motivational reason are identical. In particular, we would explain why the subject believes that p by appealing to the prediction of the tealeaves.

We can also run a case of envatment to illustrate this point. We tend to imagine the subjects who are envatted as otherwise rational (just like their unenvatted counterparts), but this is obviously not at all necessary.¹⁶ Suppose our envatted subject's belief that p does not appeal to a factive mental state as a motivational reason, but rather something altogether dubious, such as the 'evidence' of the tealeaves. Not only is this subject lacking in doxastic justification, but also explanatory justification, as we would explain why she believed as she does by appeal to the same motivational reason, and neither the motivational nor the explanatory reason aligns with a normative reason.

We noted earlier that an envatted subject, while lacking lots of doxastic justification, can nonetheless have explanatory justification for their beliefs so long as their explanatory reasons align with accessible normative reasons. But our current point is that this is far from guaranteed, as

the envatted subject could lack even explanatory justification for their beliefs. This further reinforces the idea that explanatory justification, while falling short of doxastic justification, is nonetheless an authentic positive epistemic status, one that is absent from beliefs that we have no temptation to regard as justified.

4. DEFENDING NON-CLASSICAL EPISTEMIC INTERNALISM

We have thus offered a conception of propositional and doxastic justification, albeit one that rejects the new evil demon intuition and, with it, the classical internalist account of justification. Recall that it was meant to be crucial to this alternative conception of justification that it was also squarely an internalist account of justification. But how plausible is it that an account of justification which allows non-factive mental states to function as normative and motivational reasons is genuinely a form of epistemic internalism?

The first point we can make on this score is to highlight the contrast between this proposal and what a traditional epistemic externalist denial of the new evil demon intuition would look like. The epistemic externalist will appeal to differences in the environmental facts concerning the two agents in the new evil demon case, such as regarding the reliability of their belief-forming processes. In contrast, the proposal offered here appeals to facts about the mental states of the two subjects. Aren't a subject's mental states central to our understanding of epistemic internalism? In particular, aren't a subject's mental states, including her factive mental states, epistemically accessible to the subject in a way that environmental facts are not?

The objector will no doubt respond by arguing that even if environmental facts are not being appealed to directly in this regard, they are being appealed to indirectly in virtue of how factive mental states entail such environmental facts. But why, exactly, is that problematic? Our mental states are paradigmatically 'internal', after all, so what is the basis for thinking that it is only our non-factive mental states that are relevant in this regard? This question is particularly pressing once we notice how our ordinary epistemic practices are shot-through with appeals to factive mental states as reasons—indeed, as we noted above, we paradigmatically appeal to them, in that we are usually only led to appeal to non-factive mental states as reasons when we have some reason to doubt that we are in normal epistemic conditions.

Moreover, it would obviously be dialectically problematic to fall-back on an appeal to the new evil demon intuition in this regard, and thereby argue that only non-factive mental states can be constituent parts of a subject's propositional justification. After all, we have offered an alternative way of thinking about justification that accommodates this intuition in such a way that

allows that our factive mental states can be the source of propositional justification. It would thus be important to offer an independent basis for thinking that factive mental states cannot function as normative and motivational reasons.

One consideration that might be invoked in this regard is that factive mental states are not reflectively accessible, unlike non-factive mental states, or at least that they aren't as reflectively accessible anyway. If so, then that would distinguish them from non-factive mental states in the relevant respect, and thereby put them in the camp with the kind of environmental facts that epistemic externalists appeal to in this regard. So expressed, however, this claim is rather implausible, at least to the extent that we take our ordinary epistemic practices seriously as I have suggested we should. For in those practices the factive reasons that one paradigmatically offers in support of one's beliefs are clearly treated as reflectively accessible. The subject can, for example, cite such reasons without having to undertake any further empirical inquiry (of a kind that could well be required of the environmental facts at issue with epistemic externalism).

I take it, however, that the real issue that faces the claim that factive mental states are reflectively accessible is not so much the idea that such states are reflective accessible itself, but rather what is thought to be a troubling consequence of this claim. We can delineate two core concerns on this front. The first is that in having reflective access to one's factive mental states one thereby has reflective access to specific facts about one's environment. After all, since such factive mental states entail specific empirical propositions, and one can know *a priori* that this entailment holds, then why doesn't one have an exclusively reflective route available to one to know the entailed empirical proposition? Elsewhere I have called this the *access problem* for epistemological disjunctivism.¹⁷

The second concern is that in having reflective access to one's factive mental states one is thereby in a position to come to know that one is not radically deceived about one's environment. It is built into cases of envatment as they are usually understood that the subject cannot distinguish between being the unenvatted agent and being the envatted counterpart. After all, how could the subject possibly discriminate between the two, given that the experiences in each case are *ex hypothesi* indistinguishable? And yet, if one can know that one's belief is supported by factive reasons, then given that one can also know that only an unenvatted agent can be in possession of such reasons, then can't one thereby conclude that one is the unenvatted agent rather than the envatted counterpart? In short, it seems that one is able to come to know something simply by reflecting on the nature of the rational support that one's beliefs enjoys that it ought not to be possible to know. I have previously called this the *distinguishability problem* for epistemological disjunctivism.¹⁸

I've written about both problems extensively elsewhere, and it would take us too far afield

to rehearse my responses to each problem at length here, so let me instead offer a summary. As regards the access problem, it simply doesn't follow from the fact that one has reflective access to one's factive mental states that one is thereby able to know, by reflection alone, the specific empirical proposition entailed by that factive mental state. What we have to remember here is that the factive mental state itself is the result of an empirical process. Take seeing that p as an example. One acquires such a mental state by standing in an appropriate perceptual relationship to the world. Thus although it is a mental state, it is also an empirical reason, in virtue of how it is acquired. It follows that in having reflective access to such a factive mental state, and knowing that this entails the target proposition, one doesn't thereby possess a purely *a priori* route to knowing that proposition, as the resulting belief would be based on an empirical reason.¹⁹

Notice that in responding to the access problem I wasn't denying that one could infer the proposition that is entailed by the factive mental state, and thereby come to know that proposition. My claim was only that such knowledge would not be *a priori*. Such a claim suffices to block to the access problem, but one might nonetheless think that it is puzzling enough that one can come to know a specific empirical fact about the world in this way, even if such knowledge is not *a priori*. The source of the worry here, I take it, is that there is something problematic about how one's reflective access to factive reasons provides one with a means to know facts about the world.

I think this latter problem is in essence the distinguishability problem. In particular, the distinguishability problem brings out just why it might be problematic to know facts about the world on this basis, in that it seems to enable one to know facts about the world that ought not to be able to know, such as that one is not envatted. This highlights an important point about the distinguishability problem, however, which is that it is not specifically about one's *reflective* access to factive reasons at all. After all, this issue would arise even if one's way of knowing that one's reasons are factive was straightforwardly empirical, such as via testimony, since it would still be puzzling that such knowledge could be used as way of coming to know something such as that one is not envatted.

I think the distinguishability problem raises deep epistemological issues, of a kind that extend well beyond our current concern with epistemological disjunctivism. Accordingly, a complete response would demand a self-standing article in its own right. But at the heart of my response to this problem is a distinction that I have drawn elsewhere and which I think is of general import to epistemology.²⁰ In essence, this is that the rational support our beliefs enjoy can fall into two distinct categories. The first consists of reasons to think that one has a relevant discriminative capacity. So, in the perceptual case, this might be reasons to think that one has the perceptual discriminative capacity to tell, say, goldfinches apart from other birds that could feasibly

be in the vicinity, such as chaffinches. Call this *discriminative rational support*. Discriminative rational support does not exhaust the rational support one's beliefs might enjoy, however, for we can have reasons that are completely independent of a discriminative capacity. For example, one might have an excellent testimonial basis for thinking that the bird before one is a goldfinch, and thus a goldfinch rather than chaffinch, even though one wouldn't be able to tell goldfinches apart from any other bird (including a chaffinch). Call this *favouring rational support*.

The significance of this distinction is that it entails that there is a way of knowing the difference which is not thereby a way of telling the difference. For example, one can know that the bird before one is a goldfinch rather than a chaffinch, in virtue of the possession of favouring rational support, even though one lacks a perceptual capacity to discriminate between goldfinches and chaffinches. It follows that one's inability to discriminate between two alternatives does not entail that one cannot know that one alternative obtains rather than the other. In particular, one's lack of discriminating rational support (i.e., reason to think that one has the target discriminative ability) doesn't entail that one can't know that a particular alternative obtains.

I think this distinction is of general relevance to epistemology; indeed, I claim that it is a distinction that all epistemologists should accept (i.e., and not just those attracted to epistemological disjunctivism). The distinction is nonetheless of particular import to the distinguishability problem, and thus to epistemological disjunctivism. This is because the nub of that problem is that being in possession of factive reasons seems to allow subjects to distinguish between scenarios that, *ex hypothesi*, are indistinguishable. But this claim is ambiguous.

In particular, it has a strong and a weak reading. On the strong reading, what is being suggested is that the subject has a reason for believing that she has a discriminative capacity that would enable her to distinguish between the two scenarios. That would clearly be implausible, since it is built into the envatment case that one lacks a discriminative capacity to tell one's ordinary experiences apart from the experiences had by one's envatted counterpart. The subject thus lacks any rational basis for thinking that she has such a discriminative power. On the weak reading, in contrast, all that is being claimed is that the subject can know that she is in the one scenario rather than the other. Crucially, this claim can be satisfied by the subject having appropriate favouring rational support; it needn't imply that the subject has any reason for believing that she has a special discriminative power, something that would not be credible in this case.

It is clearly the weak reading that is relevant to epistemological disjunctivism. In particular, there is no suggestion on this view that subjects have a special discriminative power to tell ordinary experiences apart from the experiences of the envatted counterpart. What is being suggested is that subjects can reflect on their factive reasons and draw appropriate consequences. These reasons are thus favouring reasons, albeit of a special kind, in that they actually entail the

target proposition, rather than merely tipping the rational scales in its favour. So construed, the teeth are removed from the distinguishability problem, in that what epistemological disjunctivism is committed to is not an implausible claim about special discriminative powers, but rather a point about how one can possess decisive favouring reasons.²¹

Finally, notice that the claim that our factive mental states can be as reflectively accessible as our non-factive mental states is also important to treating them as relevant to a subject's propositional justification. Recall that we noted earlier that for a normative reason to be part of a subject's propositional justification it was important that it was available to the subject. We didn't dwell on what such availability amounted to, except to note that being reflectively accessible to the subject should suffice in this regard, and hence that a subject's propositional justification can be concerned with her non-factive mental states. If factive mental states are no less reflectively accessible in this regard, however, then it follows that the relevant class of normative reasons which concern these states will also satisfy the rubric for propositional justification.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We've argued against the classical internalist account of justification, and in particular against the new evil demon intuition that is held to motivate it. As we've seen, once this proposal, and also the intuition that drives it, is expressed at the level of reasons, then a key issue emerges. This is that the most natural way to understand a subject's motivational reasons in ordinary circumstances is often as concerning that subject's factive mental states, as opposed to her non-factive mental states. Accordingly, while the proponent of the new evil demon intuition is right that a subject and her envatted counterpart will share motivational reasons for their beliefs, it won't follow that both subjects have beliefs that are equally doxastically justified. In particular, where the envatted subject's motivational reason for belief concerns a factive mental state, then the subject's motivational reason cannot align with a normative reason, as of course that factive mental state doesn't obtain.

That said, we have contended that the new evil demon intuition can nonetheless be accommodated. Moreover, this accommodation becomes apparent precisely because we have cast these issues at the level of reasons rather than exclusively at the level of justification. For there is a secondary notion of justification available that concerns a subject's explanatory reasons and whether they align with a normative reason. While explanatory justification is not on a par with doxastic justification—indeed, it is kind of justification that becomes relevant when doxastic justification is lacking—it is nonetheless a *bona fide* positive epistemic standing, in that one's beliefs

could be so poorly formed from a rational point of view as to lack it. It follows that there is a sense in which the subject and her envatted counterpart are both justified in their beliefs, just as the new evil demon intuition maintains, albeit not in a fashion that would underwrite the classical internalist account of justification.

Finally, we have seen that the alternative, non-classical, account of justification that we have offered—epistemological disjunctivism, as it is known—can plausibly lay claim to being a form of internalism about justification (and not only because it can accommodate the new evil demon intuition). In particular, unlike epistemic externalism, it appeals to the subject's reflectively mental states rather than to purely environmental factors. Moreover, we have argued that while the idea that one's factive mental states can be reflectively accessible could be viewed as having problematic ramifications, there are grounds to resist these putative counterintuitive consequences. I conclude that one can best capture internalist insights about justification by allowing that one's factive mental states can play a justificatory role. In particular, their obtaining can constitute the accessible normative reasons that comprise a subject's propositional justification, such that if the motivational reason for the subject's belief aligns with this normative reason, then the belief is thereby doxastically justified.²²

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NOTES

- ¹ Orthodoxy among epistemic internalists at any rate, as there is an influential tradition in epistemic externalism that follows Goldman (1979) in treating doxastic justification (reliabilistically understood) as the fundamental notion (though he expresses the propositional/doxastic justification distinction in different terminology—*viz.*, ‘*ex ante*’/‘*ex post*’ justification). See, for example, Kornblith (2017). For a dissenting voice regarding this orthodoxy within epistemic internalism, see Turri (2010*b*). See also Melis (2018). Note that I won’t be commentating on the basing relation here, but rather taking this notion as understood. For what it is worth, I defend a causal explanatory account of the basing relation—see Pritchard (2019). For two helpful surveys of recent work on the basing relation in epistemology, see Neta (2010) and Sylvan (2016*b*). See also the comprehensive account of the basing relation offered in Neta (2019). For further discussion of the distinction between propositional and doxastic justification, see Silva & Oliveira (*forthcoming*).
- ² I have defended epistemological disjunctivism in a number of works, but see especially Pritchard (2008; 2012; 2015). I claim that such a view is rooted in the work of McDowell (e.g., 1995). See also Neta & Pritchard (2007).
- ³ The dominant version of mentalism in the literature is that defended in Conee & Feldman (2004). See also Wedgwood (2002). For some key defences of accessibilism, see Chisholm (1977) and Bonjour (1985, ch. 2).
- ⁴ See, for example, the process reliabilist account of epistemic justification (both doxastic and propositional) offered by Goldman (1979). For further discussion of the epistemic externalism/internalism distinction more generally, see Pryor (2001), Vahid (2011), and Pappas (2014). For my own recent take on these issues, see Pritchard (*forthcominga*).
- ⁵ The *loci classici* for discussion of the new evil genius intuition are Lehrer & Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1984). For discussion, see Littlejohn (2009).
- ⁶ See, especially, Lehrer & Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1984).
- ⁷ For a prominent example of a view that takes the first horn, see Bach (1985). See also Engel (1992). With regard to the second horn, see Goldman’s (1986; 1988) influential proposals in this regard (normal worlds reliabilism and the distinction between strong and weak justification, respectively).
- ⁸ For our purposes we can set aside complications that might arise concerning content externalism in this regard. If you like, stipulate that the mental states in question are not only non-factive, but also more specifically concern narrow contents.
- ⁹ Note that I am setting aside here the potential complication posed by normative defeaters, and in particular whether a normative defeater of which the subject is currently unaware might nonetheless be relevant to the doxastic justification of her belief even by epistemic internalist lights. On this point, see the exchange between Greco (2005) and Fumerton (2005). I am grateful to Paul Silva for pressing me on this issue.
- ¹⁰ See Turri (2009) for a presentation of the new evil demon intuition that is expressed at the level of reasons rather than justification. Note that in what follows we will take it as given that reasons are to be understood epistemically, as reasons for belief, rather than, say, as reasons for action.
- ¹¹ The terminology is relatively common in the literature, though Sylvan (2016*b*) refers to motivational reasons as ‘operative reasons’, on account of what he regards as the awkwardness of talking of motivation in the context of doxastic attitudes. Note that for motivational reasons it is the subject’s *actual* reason for believing that *p* that is important, which might not be the same as the subject’s *perceived* reason for believing that *p*. In what follows we will focus on cases where no such conflict arises. I discuss motivational reasons, and in particular their relation to normative and explanatory reasons, in more detail in Pritchard (2019; *forthcomingb*). For further discussion of epistemic reasons, see Turri (2009) and Sylvan (2016*a*; 2016*b*).
- ¹² For further defence of this point about our everyday usage of factive reasons, see McDowell (1995) and Pritchard (2012, part one).
- ¹³ For some key defences of epistemological disjunctivism, see endnote 2.
- ¹⁴ Indeed, a number of commentators have argued that seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*. See, for example, Dretske (1969), Williamson (2000), and Cassam (2007). I have argued elsewhere that this entailment doesn’t hold—see Pritchard (2011; 2012*b*, part 1)—though it is still true on my view that seeing that *p* and knowing that *p* are closely related. See also Turri (2010*a*) for a distinct critique of the thesis that seeing that *p* entails knowing that *p*.
- ¹⁵ Notice that this proposal is subtly different from that offered by Bach (1985) and Engel (1992). While they deny that the subjects in the new evil demon case share doxastic justification, they maintain that the envatted subject is nonetheless ‘personally justified’, where this means that as a belief-forming subject she is justified in believing as she does (even if she lacks doxastic justification). Explanatory justification, however, is still a form of justification that applies to the target belief.
- ¹⁶ See Pryor (2001, §4.3) for further discussion of cases involving agents who are both envatted and irrational.
- ¹⁷ See, especially, Pritchard (2012, part 1).
- ¹⁸ See, especially, Pritchard (2012, part 1).
- ¹⁹ For my full response to the access problem, see Pritchard (2012, part 1).
- ²⁰ See especially Pritchard (2010).
- ²¹ For my full response to the distinguishability problem, see Pritchard (2012, part 3; 2015, part 3). Note that the full response also considers how the distinguishability problem relates to the challenge posed by radical scepticism, whereas I have set aside this challenge for our purposes here. In particular, it does not follow from what we’ve just

argued that such decisive favouring rational support is applicable in terms of responding to radical scepticism. As it happens, I think it is applicable, but that requires further argumentation, as I explain in my full response to this problem.

²² Thanks to Paul Silva and Mona Simion for detailed comments on an earlier version of this paper.