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Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 50, Supplement. (Autumn, 1990), pp. 45-71.

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Justification in the 20th Century

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I. The Received Tradition

It would be colossal understatement to say that Anglo-American epistemology of this century has made much of the notion of *epistemic justification*. First, there is the widely celebrated “justified true belief” (JTB) account or analysis of knowledge, an analysis we imbibed with our mothers milk. According to the inherited lore of the epistemological tribe, the JTB account enjoyed the status of epistemological orthodoxy until Edmund Gettier shattered it in 1963 with his three page paper “Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?”¹ After 1963 the justified true belief account of knowledge was seen to be defective and lost its exalted status; but even those convinced by Gettier that justification (along with truth) isn’t *sufficient* for knowledge still mostly think it *necessary* and *nearly sufficient* for knowledge: the basic shape or contours of the concept of knowledge is given by justified true belief, even if a quasi-technical fillip or addendum (“the fourth condition”) is needed to appease Gettier.

There is an interesting historical irony here: it isn’t easy to find many explicit statements of a JTB analysis of knowledge prior to Gettier; it is almost as if a distinguished critic created a tradition in the very act of destroying it.² Still, there are *some* fairly clear statements of a justified

¹ *Analysis* 23 (1963), pp. 121-23.

² Thus, for example, in Roderick Chisholm’s *Perceiving* (1957) there is an analysis of knowledge, but one that makes no explicit reference to justification:

“S knows that h is true” means (i) S accepts h; (ii) S has adequate evidence for h and (iii) h is true (p. 16).

In the first edition of *Theory of Knowledge*, published in 1966, which was after Gettier but before it was widely recognized that Gettier had done in the JTB analysis, Chisholm again offers an analysis of knowledge, and again one in which justification plays no explicit role:

S knows at *t* that *h* is true, provided (1) S believes *h* at *t*; (2) *h* is true; and (3) *h* is evi-

true belief analysis of knowledge prior to Gettier. Thus, according to C. I. Lewis, "Knowledge is belief which not only is true but also is justified in its believing attitude."³ And A. J. Ayer speaks of knowledge as "the right to be sure"⁴; for reasons that will be clearer a bit further along, I believe this is a statement of a JTB account of knowledge.

So one element in the received epistemological tradition in the 20th century is that justification is necessary and (with truth) nearly sufficient (sufficient up to Gettier problems) for knowledge. But what exactly is justification? Here we are offered a wide and indeed confusing assortment of alternatives. I begin by calling to mind some contemporary examples in which this notion figures.

In the third edition of *Theory of Knowledge* (Prentice Hall 1989) Roderick Chisholm speaks of the question 'What is Knowledge?' and suggests that

The traditional or classic answer — and the one proposed in Plato's dialogue, the *Theaetetus* — is that knowledge is *justified* true belief (p. 90). (See also the quotation from *The Foundations of Knowing* in footnote 2.)

According to Roderick Firth,

To decide whether Watson knows that the coachman did it we must decide whether or not Watson is justified in believing that the coachman did it. Thus if Watson believes that the coachman did it, we must decide whether his conclusion is based rationally on the evidence.⁵

Lawrence Bonjour⁶ holds that the traditional JTB account of knowledge is "at least approximately correct"; furthermore,

We cannot, in most cases at least, bring it about directly that our beliefs are true, but we can presumably bring it about directly (though perhaps only in the long run) that they are epistemically justified (p. 8).

dent at *t* for *S*.

In *The Foundations of Knowing* (1986), however, Chisholm speaks of "the traditional definition of knowledge": "Now we are in a position to define the type of justification presupposed by the traditional definition of knowledge. . . ." And after defining it he goes on to say, "And so we retain the traditional definition of knowledge:

S knows that $p = Df$ p ; S believes that p ; and S is justified in believing that p " (p. 47).

³ *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1946), p. 9.

⁴ *The Problem of Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1956), p. 28.

⁵ "Are Epistemic Concepts Reducible to Ethical Concepts?" in *Values and Morals*, ed. A. Goldman and J. Kim (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1978), p. 219.

⁶ *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985).

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. To accept a belief in the absence of such a reason . . . is to neglect the pursuit of truth; such acceptance is, one might say, *epistemically irresponsible*. My contention here is that the idea of avoiding such irresponsibility, of being epistemically responsible in one's believings, is the core of the notion of epistemic justification (p. 8).

If a given putative knower is himself to be epistemically responsible in accepting beliefs in virtue of their meeting the standards of a given epistemological account, then it seems to follow that an appropriate metajustification for those principles must, in principle at least, be available to *him*. (p. 10).

Earl Conee and Richard Feldman claim that

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*.⁷

Conee (*Monist*, July, 1988) adds that

A person has a justified belief only if the person has reflective access to evidence that the belief is true. . . . Such examples make it reasonable to conclude that there is epistemic justification for a belief only where the person has cognitive access to evidence that supports the truth of the belief. Justifying evidence must be internally available (p. 398).

William P. Alston considers and rejects an account of justification in terms of responsibility or duty fulfillment and proposes instead that

S is J_{eg} [$'e'$ for 'evaluative' and $'g'$ for 'grounds'] justified in believing that *p* iff *S*'s believing that *p*, as *S* did, was a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that *S*'s belief that *p* was based on adequate grounds and *S* lacked sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary.⁸

"Adequate grounds," furthermore, "are those sufficiently indicative of the truth of *p*." Alston also reports that he finds "widely shared and strong intuitions in favor of some kind of accessibility requirement for justification."¹⁰ In "Justification and Truth" (*Philosophical Studies* 46 [1984]) Stewart Cohen holds that the demon hypothesis entails that "our experience is just as it would be if our cognitive processes were reliable" (281) and hence that we would be justified in believing as we do in fact, when our cognitive processes are reliable. So reliability, he argues, can't be a necessary condition of justification. He also seems to join Bonjour in thinking of justification as a matter of epistemic responsibility (pp. 282, 284). And (Keith) Lehrer and Cohen (*Synthese* 55 [1983]: 192-93):

⁷ "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies*, 1985, p. 15.

⁸ "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," *The Monist* (January, 1985), p. 71. See also the more extended quotations from Alston below, p. 67 ff.

⁹ "An Externalist's Internalism" *Synthese* 74 (March, 1988), p. 269.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

Imagine that, unknown to us, our cognitive processes, those involved in perception, memory and inference, are rendered unreliable by the actions of a powerful demon or malevolent scientist. It would follow on reliabilist views that under such conditions the beliefs generated by those processes would not be justified. This result is unacceptable. The truth of the demon hypothesis also entails that our experiences and our reasonings are just what they would be if our cognitive processes were reliable, and therefore, that we would be just as well justified in believing what we do if the demon hypothesis were true as if it were false. Contrary to reliabilism, we aver that under the conditions of the demon hypothesis our beliefs would be justified in an epistemic sense. Justification is a normative concept. It is an evaluation of how well one has pursued one's epistemic goals. Consequently, if we have reason to believe that perception, for example, is a reliable process, then the mere fact that it turns out not to be reliable, because of some improbable contingency, does not obliterate our justification for perceptual belief. This is especially clear when we have good reason to believe that the contingency, which, in fact, makes our cognitive processes unreliable, does not obtain.

According to the early Alvin Goldman, on the other hand:

The justificational status of a belief is a function of the reliability of the process or processes that cause it, where (as a first approximation) reliability consists in the tendency of a process to produce beliefs that are true rather than false.¹¹

And according to the later Goldman of *Epistemology and Cognition*¹²:

(PI*) A cognizer's belief in *p* at time *t* is justified if and only if it is the final member of a finite sequence of doxastic states of the cognizer such that some (single) right J-rule system licenses the transition of each member of the sequence from some earlier state(s) (*p.* 83),

where

(ARI) A J-rule system *R* is right if and only if *R* permits certain (basic) psychological processes, and the instantiation of these processes would result in a truth ratio of belief that meets some specified high threshold (greater than .5) (*p.* 106).

Now: how shall we understand this blooming, buzzing confusion with respect to justification? There seem to be at least four central ideas in the above quotations. First, there is the pervasive connection between justification and knowledge. Second, (Bonjour, Cohen, the first Alstonian notion) justification is a matter of *epistemic responsibility*; a belief is justified if the person holding it isn't guilty of epistemic irresponsibility in forming and maintaining it. Third (Alston, Conee, Lehrer and Cohen, Cohen), there is the suggestion that there is an *internalist* component to justification (although Goldman seems to demur). The believer must have cognitive access to something important lurking in the neighborhood — whether or not he *is* justified, for example, or to the *grounds* of his justification, that by virtue of which he is justified (Alston), or to the con-

¹¹ "What is Justified Belief" in *Justification and Knowledge: New Studies in Epistemology*, ed. George Pappas (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1979), p. 10.

¹² Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986.

nection between those grounds and the justified belief. Of course not just any old cognitive accessibility will suffice. The distance from Baghdad to Jerusalem is cognitively accessible to me (I own an atlas); but that isn't the right sort of accessibility. Instead, what is required is some kind of *special* access; perhaps S can determine by reflection alone, for example, whether he is justified (Alston, Conee, Lehrer and Cohen, Bonjour). There is also a suggestion of another kind of internalism: justification depends only on states, like experience and belief, that are in a recognizable if hard to characterize sense internal to the believer. And finally, there is to be found in many of the quotations the idea that justification is a matter of *having evidence*, or at least depends upon evidence (Alston, Firth, Conee, Conee and Feldman, Chisholm).

So we have several different suggestions as to what justification is: being formed responsibly, being reliably produced, being such that the believer has adequate evidence, being formed on the basis of an internally accessible and truth conducive ground, being an evaluation of how well the believer has pursued her epistemic goals. There is also the connection with knowledge, with internalism, and with evidence. How shall we understand this welter of views as to the nature of justification? And how does it happen that justification is associated, in this way, with evidence? And what is the source of the internalist requirement and how does it fit in? And why is justification associated, in this way, with knowledge?

II. Classical Internalism

Here what we need is history: archeology, as Foucault says (although, *pace* Foucault, there is no reason to think we will uncover a hidden political agenda). We must go back to the fountainheads of western epistemological thought, those twin towers of Western epistemology, Descartes and Locke. For *some* topics — the nature of proper names, perhaps, or the question of serious actualism (that is, the question whether objects can have properties in possible worlds in which they do not exist) a grasp of history of the topic is not obviously essential to a grasp of the topic. Not so for epistemic justification: to understand the contemporary situation of that notion we must take a careful look at its history, in particular at some of the ideas of Descartes, and perhaps even more importantly, Locke. And here what is of first importance is to see that for Descartes and Locke the notion of *duty* or *obligation* play a central role in the whole doxastic enterprise. Firth, Chisholm and other contemporaries point out that there is a strong normative component in such basic epistemological concepts as justification and warrant; Chisholm (as we shall see) goes on to claim that this normative component is really deontological, having to do with (moral) duties, obligations, requirements. In the contemporary context it

required a real insight to see clearly the normative character of these epistemic concepts. For Descartes and Locke, however, deontological notions enter in a way that is explicit *in excelsis*.

Following Augustine (*De Libero Arbitrio*) Descartes gives his classical account of the origin of error:

But if I abstain from giving my judgment on any thing when I do not perceive it with sufficient clearness and distinctness, it is plain that I act rightly. . . . But if I determine to deny or affirm, I no longer make use as I should of my free will, and if I affirm what is not true, it is evident that I deceive myself; even though I judge according to truth, this comes about only by chance, and I do not escape the blame of misusing my freedom; for the light of nature teaches us that the knowledge of the understanding should always precede the determination of the will. It is in the misuse of the free will that the privation which constitutes the characteristic nature of error is met with.¹³

As Descartes sees the matter, error is due to a misuse of free will, a misuse for which one is guilty and blameworthy (“. . . and I do not escape the blame of misusing my freedom. . . .”) There is a *duty* or *obligation* not to affirm a proposition unless we perceive it with sufficient clarity and distinctness; that there is such a duty is something we are taught by “the light of nature.”¹⁴ According to Descartes, *being justified* is being within our rights, flouting no epistemic duties, doing no more than what is permitted. We are justified when we regulate or order our beliefs in such a way as to conform to the duty not to affirm a proposition unless we perceive it with sufficient clarity and distinctness.

Locke is if anything even more explicit about this deontological component of the epistemic:

Faith is nothing but a firm assent of the mind: which if it be regulated, as is our duty, cannot be afforded to anything, but upon good reason; and so cannot be opposite to it. He that believes, without having any reason for believing, may be in love with his own fancies; but neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due his maker, who would have him use those discerning faculties he has given him, to keep him out of mistake and error. He that does not this to the best of his power, however he sometimes lights on truth, is in the right but

¹³ Meditation 4. P. 176 in Vol. I of *Philosophical Works of Descartes*, ed. Haldane and Ross (Dover, 1955 [first edition Cambridge University Press, 1911]).

¹⁴ In “What is Cartesian Doubt?” (at the moment unpublished) Nicholas Wolterstorff argues that on the best understanding of Descartes, he didn’t really mean to insist that there is a duty or obligation to affirm a proposition only if it is clearly and distinctly perceived. What he meant instead is that a proposition constitutes *scientia* for us only if it meets that condition. Wolterstorff’s interpretation of Descartes makes sense of much of what Descartes says; in the long run he may be right. Still, Descartes certainly *seems* to say, here, that I am obliged to believe a proposition only if it is sufficiently clear and distinct for me; this is certainly how he has commonly been understood; and it is this common understanding that is relevant to the formation of the twentieth century received tradition with respect to justification.

by chance; and I know not whether the luckiness of the accident will excuse the irregularity of his proceeding. This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever mistakes he runs into: whereas he that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth, by those helps and abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature, that though he should miss truth, he will not miss the reward of it. For he governs his assent right, and places it as he should, who in any case or matter whatsoever, believes or disbelieves, according as reason directs him. He that does otherwise, transgresses against his own light, and misuses those faculties, which were given him. . . .¹⁵

Here again there is the clear affirmation that we have an epistemic or doxastic duty: a duty, for example, not to afford a firm assent of the mind “to anything, but upon good reason.” To act in accord with these duties or obligations is to be within one’s rights; it is to do only what is permissible; it is to be subject to no blame or disapprobation; it is to have flouted no duties; it is to be deontologically approvable; it is, in a word, to be justified.

Now perhaps Descartes accepts a justified true belief account of knowledge; for he thinks that one is justified only in accepting just those propositions that are clear and distinct; and those propositions are just the ones he thinks we know. Locke, however, clearly does not; for him, knowledge and belief are two quite different states, and duty or obligation applies only to the latter. Your duty, he says, is to regulate your beliefs in such a way that you believe a proposition only if you have good reasons for it; those reasons would be propositions that are certain for you, and of which, accordingly, you have knowledge. But knowledge itself does not involve fulfillment of duty, epistemic or otherwise; indeed, here the dual concepts of obligation and permission do not really apply. Knowledge, he says, is a matter of noticing connections among ideas, and is only of what is certain. But if a proposition is certain for me, he holds, then there is no question of regulating my belief with respect to it. The reason is that I have no control with respect to such propositions, so that whether I believe is not up to me. Speaking of self-evident propositions, he says “all such affirmations, and negations, are made without any possibility of doubt, uncertainty or hesitation, and must necessarily be assented to, as soon as understood. . . .” (IV vii, 4). While Locke speaks here of just one of the several kinds of items of which we can have certainty, he clearly thinks the same thing about the others.

So Locke does not equate warrant — that quantity enough of which is sufficient, with truth, for knowledge — with epistemic justification, or, as we could call it to remind ourselves of the reference to duty and obligation, *deontological* epistemic justification. Nevertheless, deontological

¹⁵ *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Essay IV, xvii, 24.

justification is of the very first importance for him as it is for Descartes. His central thought is that being justified in holding a belief is having fulfilled one's epistemic duties in forming or continuing to hold that belief. This thought is the *fons et origo* of the whole internalist tradition. It is this notion of deontological justification that is the source of internalism: deontology implies internalism. But Locke is also the source (the proximate source, anyway) of the idea that justification is a matter of *evidence*; we can also understand the contemporary association of evidence with justification in terms of Locke's ideas.

I want to explain how justification requires internalism; but first we must make a detour through a steep and thorny area of ethics. Most of us will agree that a person is guilty, properly blamed, properly subject to censure and moral disapproval, if and only if she fails to do her duty (where among her duties might be that of refraining from doing something). So

- (a) you are properly blamed for failing to do something **A** if and only if it is your duty to to **A** (and you fail to do it).

Of course we also think that someone who has done no more than what she nonculpably thinks duty permits or requires, is not culpable or guilty in doing what she does, even if we think that what she has done is wrong. You are the governor and it is up to you to decide whether a certain prisoner is to suffer the death penalty. You reflect as carefully and impartially as you can and make your decision; perhaps you believe that it is your duty in the circumstances not to commute the death sentence and let the law take its course. Then I will not properly hold you blameworthy or guilty for doing what you do, even if I think you made the wrong decision. You can't be faulted for doing what you think is the right thing to do — provided, of course, that you came to that judgment in a nonculpable way. (If you formed the judgment out of vengefulness, or pride, or lordly contempt for those whom you take to be your inferiors, then things are very different.) So we also have

- (b) If a person nonculpably believes that doing **A** is morally required or permitted, then she is not guilty (not to be blamed) for doing **A**; and if she nonculpably believes that refraining from doing **A** is morally required or permitted, then she is not guilty (not to be blamed) for refraining from doing **A**.

It is plausible to add, still further, that if I believe that it is my duty, all things considered, to do **A**, then I am guilty, culpable, morally blameworthy if I do not do **A**.¹⁶

¹⁶ The apostle Paul points out that those who think eating meat is wrong are blameworthy if

Sadly enough, however, these principles taken together appear to lead to trouble. For suppose I nonculpably think I am permitted to do A. Then by (b) I am not guilty and not to be blamed for doing A; but then by (a) doing A is not my duty. So if I nonculpably think it is not my duty to do something A, then it is not my duty to do A; and if I nonculpably think it is not my duty to refrain from doing A, then it is not my duty to refrain from doing it. Furthermore (given the addition to (b)), we can argue similarly that if I think it is my duty to do A, then I am culpable if I do not do A, in which case it is my duty to do A.

But isn't this wrong? You and I might argue at considerable and heated length about what duty requires in a given set of circumstances. Perhaps I think you ought to commute that sentence; you think the right thing to do is to let it stand. And you couldn't sensibly claim that since you do in fact believe that is your duty, and believe that nonculpably, you automatically win the argument. It isn't given in advance that I am always right about what my duty requires, so long as I am nonculpable in holding the opinion I hold. If that were so, why should I come to you, asking for advice as to what my duty really is, in a given situation? So (a) and (b) both seem correct; taken together, however, they seem to entail a proposition that is clearly false.

Here, as Aquinas says, we must make a distinction. An attractive way out of this quandary is offered by the distinction between *objective* and *subjective* duty or rightness. You are guilty or blameworthy if you fail to do your *subjective* duty, but not necessarily guilty for failing to do your *objective* duty. Guilt, being properly blamed, being properly subject to censure, these things go with violation of subjective duty. Perhaps my objective duties are constituted by virtue of their being, of the options open to me, the ones that contribute most to the greatest good; or perhaps they are constituted by God's commands; or perhaps they are the ones that bear a certain particular relation of fittingness to the circumstances. Then a person might well not know or be able to see that a given action was the right one, the dutiful one, in the circumstances. Perhaps I suffer from a certain sort of moral blindness; I simply cannot see that I have an obligation to care for my aging parents. Then I am not blameworthy for failing to care for them, unless my moral blindness itself somehow arises from dereliction of duty. Assume, just for purposes of argument, that the ground of the obligation not to steal is the divine command "Thou shalt not steal." I could hardly be blamed for stealing if I (nonculpably) didn't know that stealing is wrong or didn't know, of a given act of stealing I am performing, that it is wrong, or didn't know, of a given act of taking some-

they eat it, even if in fact it is not (objectively) wrong: "But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean" *Romans 14*, v. 14.

thing, that it is indeed an act of stealing. You are guilty, or to blame, or properly subject to censure only if, as we say, you *knowingly* flout your duty. Ignorance may be no excuse in the law; but nonculpable ignorance is an excusing condition in morality. Indeed, it is sometimes also an excusing condition in the law; according to the M'Naghten Rule you aren't legally culpable if you can't tell right from wrong.

Now how, exactly, does this help with respect to the above quandary? Well, the problem was that (a) and (b) seemed to entail that I couldn't make a nonculpable mistake about what my duty was; but that seemed wrong, since it is perfectly sensible for you to challenge my belief as to what duty requires, even if you don't for a moment believe that I arrived at that belief culpably. And the resolution is that while I can't make a nonculpable error about my *subjective* duty, the same does not hold for my *objective* duty; but what we dispute about, when we dispute about what my duty, in a given circumstance is, is not my subjective duty but my objective duty. It is easy enough, in the right circumstances, to make a mistake about *that*.¹⁷

Given that no one is guilty for doing what she nonculpably believes is right, you might expect that we would ordinarily be receptive to the claim of ignorance as an excusing condition. The fact is, however, that in many circumstance we are extremely reluctant to accept such a claim. I take part in a racist lynching: you will not be impressed by my claim that, after careful reflection, I considered that the right thing to do. We are deeply suspicious of such claims. We are not ordinarily receptive to the claim, on the part of a murderer or thief, that, after due consideration, she thought the course she took most morally appropriate of those open to her. And the reason, I think, is that there are many moral views we don't think someone of sound mind could nonculpably come to accept. We think a properly functioning human being will find injustice — the sort depicted, for example, in the story the prophet Nathan told King David — despicable and odious. We think a person who engages in that sort of behavior really knows better, and has perhaps allowed himself to be temporarily blinded by greed or pride or lust. There is a link between objective and subjective duty — a link provided, we think, by our nature. Any normal adult who gives the matter a moment's thought can see that injustice of that sort is

¹⁷ Can we explain subjective duty in terms of objective duty or *vice versa*? Or, if that is too much to hope for, can we at least state an interesting relation between the two? Perhaps: according to Alan Donagan (*The Theory of Morality*, chapter 2.3, pp. 52-57; and chapter 4, pp. 112 ff.) my subjective duty is that which it would be objectively right to blame me for not doing. In the other direction, a proposition states an objective duty for me if and only if it is true, and is such that if I knew it, then it would state a subjective duty for me.

wicked and reprehensible. Indeed, we needn't limit ourselves to adults: small children often exhibit a very well developed sense of justice and fairness.

So for a large and important class of cases we think objective and subjective duty coincide, and do so because of our cognitive constitution; there is a large class of cases in which a properly functioning human being can just see (all else being equal) that a certain course of action is wrong. Now it is this same thought — the thought that in a large class of cases objective and subjective duty coincide — that underlies classical internalism. This coincidence of objective and subjective duty is the driving force behind the classical internalism of Descartes and Locke. We can see this in more detail as follows.

The First Internalist Motif

According to Locke and Descartes, epistemic justification is *deontological* justification. And here they are clearly thinking of *subjective* duty or obligation; they are thinking of guilt and innocence, blame and blamelessness. If I do not have certainty but believe anyway, says Descartes, "I do not escape the blame of misusing my freedom." Locke, clearly enough, is also thinking of subjective duty ("This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever mistakes he runs into . . ."). But then the first internalist motif follows immediately:

MI. *Epistemic justification (i.e., subjective epistemic justification, being such that I am not blameworthy) is entirely up to me and within my power.*

All that is required is that I do my subjective duty, act in such a way that I am blameless. All I have to do is my duty; and, given that ought implies can, I am guaranteed to be able to do that. So justification is entirely within my power; whether or not my beliefs are justified is up to me, within my control. My system of beliefs may be wildly skewed and laughably far from the truth; I may be a brain in a vat or a victim of a malicious Cartesian demon; but whether my beliefs have justification is still up to me.

The Second Internalist Motif

Descartes and Locke, as I say, are speaking there of subjective duty. But of course they are also speaking of *objective* duty. Locke holds that it is my duty to regulate my belief in such a way that I believe only what I have good reasons for, i.e., only what is epistemically probable with respect to my total evidence. One who does otherwise, he says, "transgresses against his own light, and misuses those faculties, which were given him." Such a

person, he says, “neither seeks truth as he ought, nor pays the obedience due his maker, who would have him use those discerning faculties he has given him, to keep him out of mistake and error.” To regulate my belief in this way is my *objective* duty; what makes an act of believing permissible or right is its being appropriately supported by the believer’s total evidence. But Locke also holds that this is my *subjective* duty; if I do not regulate my belief in this way I am blameworthy, guilty of dereliction of epistemic duty. (Merely *trying* to regulate it thus is not sufficient; I must *succeed* in so doing if I am not to be blameworthy.) Objective and subjective duty thus coincide. Similarly for Descartes: if you give assent to what is not certain then (*ceteris paribus*) you are blameworthy, have flouted subjective duty as well as objective duty. So the second internalist motif:

M2. *For a large, important, and basic class of objective epistemic duties, objective and subjective duty coincide; what you objectively ought to do matches that which is such that if you don’t do it you are guilty and blameworthy.*

And the link is provided by our nature: in a large and important class of cases, a properly functioning human being can simply see whether a given belief is or isn’t (objectively) justified for him. (Just as we think, in the more general moral case, that certain heinous acts are such that a properly functioning human being can’t make a nonculpable mistake as to whether those acts are morally acceptable.)

The second internalist motif has three corollaries.

First: if it is your subjective duty to regulate your belief in this way, then you must be able to see or tell that regulating belief this way is indeed your duty. Locke and Descartes clearly hold that a dutiful, conscientious person whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly will not make a mistake as to what is the right method or practice for regulating belief. Descartes claims that it is clear to us that we must not give assent to what is uncertain: “the light of nature,” he says, “teaches us that the knowledge of the understanding should always precede the determination of the will.” And Locke says that the person who does not regulate his belief according to the evidence “*transgresses against his own light*, and misuses those faculties, which were given him . . .” (my emphasis). So the first corollary:

C1. *In a large and important set of cases, a properly functioning person can simply see (can’t make a nonculpable mistake about) what objective epistemic duty requires.*

To see the second corollary, we must note first that (according to both Descartes and Locke) I don't determine *directly*, so to speak, what it is that I am obliged to believe and withhold. According to Locke, I determine whether a given belief is acceptable for me or justified for me by determining something else: whether it is supported by what is certain for me — whether, that is, it is probable with respect to what I know. Similarly for Descartes: I don't *directly* determine whether a proposition is acceptable or justified for me; I do it by determining whether or not it is *clear and distinct* for me. So I have a way of determining when a belief is justified for me; to use a medieval expression, I have a *ratio cognoscendi* for whether a belief is justified for me. As we have seen, Descartes and Locke think that a well-formed human being cannot (in those basic cases) make a conscientious error as to whether a given belief is justified for her; but then, in those cases, she will also be unable to make a conscientious mistake about whether a given belief has the property by which she *determines* whether that belief is justified for her. Locke and Descartes therefore believe that a well-formed, conscientious human being will (at least in that large and important basic class of cases) be able to tell whether a given belief has the property that forms the *ratio cognoscendi* for justification. So the second corollary:

C2. *In a large, important, and basic class of cases a properly functioning human person can simply see (can't make a nonculpable mistake about) whether a proposition has the property by means of which she tells whether a proposition is justified for her.*

As we have just seen, Locke and Descartes hold that I have a means of telling whether a given proposition is justified for me; I do it by determining whether it is supported by my total evidence (Locke) or whether it is certain for me (Descartes). But note that what *confers* justification on a belief for me, the *ground* of its justification, is, as they see it, the very same property as *that by which I determine* whether it is justified for me. According to Locke, the *ratio essendi* (to invoke the other half of that medieval contrast) of justification is the property of being supported by the believer's total evidence, while according to Descartes it is the property of being certain for the believer. But then the ground of justification (the justification-making property) is identical with the property by which we determine whether a belief has justification: *ratio cognoscendi* coincides with *ratio essendi*.¹⁸ (This is not, of course, inevitable; in the case of

¹⁸ I don't mean to suggest, of course, that Locke and Descartes were clear about the distinction between *ratio essendi* and *ratio cognoscendi*; like the distinction between modality

measles, velocity, blood pressure, weight, and serum cholesterol our *ratio cognoscendi* does not coincide with the *ratio essendi*.)

If so, however, then there is another kind of error a properly functioning dutiful human being cannot make; such a person is so constructed that (in that class of basic cases) she cannot conscientiously come to believe, of the justification making property, that a given belief has it when in fact it does not. According to Locke, a properly functioning human being couldn't both be appropriately dutiful in forming his beliefs (in these cases), and also mistakenly believe, of some proposition, that it was supported by his total evidence; according to Descartes, such a person in such a case could not mistakenly come to think that a belief was certain for her when in fact it was not. We have a certain guaranteed access to the *ratio cognoscendi* of justification; but if *ratio cognoscendi* and *ratio essendi* coincide, then we also have guaranteed access to the latter. So the third corollary:

- C3. *In a large, important and basic class of epistemic cases a properly functioning human person can simply see (can't make a nonculpable mistake about) whether a proposition has the property that confers justification upon it for her.*

Now the fact of the matter seems to be, *contra* Locke, that cases in which it is obvious what my total evidence supports are, after all, relatively few and far between. It is easy enough to make a nonculpable mistake about what my total evidence supports; it is often very difficult to tell whether a belief has (what Locke sees as) the *ratio cognoscendi* of justification. Perhaps Locke sometimes saw this; significantly enough, he sometimes retreats to the weaker view that what confers justification is the belief's being such that *upon reflection* I think it is supported by my evidence. Here it seems clear that I do have the requisite special access.

The Third Internalist Motif

There is still another and somewhat less well defined internalist motif here. According to Locke and Descartes, I have a sort of guaranteed access to whether a belief is justified for me and also to what makes it justified for me: I cannot (if I suffer from no cognitive deficiency) nonculpably but mistakenly believe that a belief is justified or has the justification-making property. This is the source of another internalist motif; for it is only certain of my states and properties to which it is at all plausible to think that I

de re and modality *de dicto*, and the distinction between the necessity of the consequent and the necessity of the consequence, this is a case of an important piece of philosophical lore known to every medieval graduate student but disastrously lost in the Renaissance rejection of all things scholastic.

have that sort of access. Clearly you don't have this sort of access to the Ph level of your blood, or the size of your liver, or whether your pancreas is now functioning properly. The sorts of things about which it is plausible to hold that you can't make a mistake, will be, for example, whether you believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico, whether you are now being appeared to redly, whether you are trying to get to Boston on time, or whether you are trying to bring it about that, for every proposition you consider, you believe it if and only if it is true. So the justification-making property will have to attach to such states as my believing thus and so, my being appeared to in such and such a fashion, my aiming at a given state of affairs, my trying to do something or other, and the like. These states are the ones such that it is plausible to hold of them that I cannot make a non-culpable mistake as to whether I exhibit them. But they are also, in some recognizable, if hard to define sense, internal to me — internal to me as a knower or a cognizing being. Thinking of justification in the deontological way characteristic of classical internalism induces *epistemic* internalism: and that in turn induces internalism of this different but related sort. It isn't easy to think of a name for internalism of this sort, but perhaps the name 'personal internalism' (calling attention to the way in which my beliefs, desires, experience and aims are crucial to me as a person) is no worse than some others.

Of course it is not *necessary* that the things to which a person has this special access are internal in this sense; there could be a being who had guaranteed and indeed logically incorrigible access to properties that were not in this way internal to him. If the bulk of the theistic tradition is right, God is essentially omniscient: but then it is impossible (impossible in the broadly logical sense) that he err on any topic whatever, internal to him or not. Not so for us.

III. Back to the Present

Suppose we return to the 20th century; we are now in a better position, I think, to understand the swirling diversity that it presents with respect to justification. According to the 20th century received tradition, as we saw earlier, (1) justification is necessary and (along with truth) nearly sufficient for knowledge, (2) there is a strong connection between justification and evidence, and (3) justification involves internalism of those two kinds (epistemic and personal internalism). Further, justification itself is taken as a matter of epistemic responsibility or aptness for epistemic duty fulfillment (Firth, Lehrer, Cohen, Chisholm), as an "evaluation" of how well you have fulfilled your epistemic goals (Lehrer and Cohen), as being believed or accepted on the basis of an adequate truth conducive ground (Alston), as being produced by a reliable belief

producing mechanism (Goldman), and as being supported by or fitting the evidence (Conee, Conee and Feldman, Firth, many others). The project was to try to understand this diversity, and to see what underlies (1) the close connection of justification with knowledge, (2) the internalist requirement laid upon epistemic justification, and (3) the stress upon evidence in connection with justification. I think it is now easier to see answers to these questions.

First, the basic Cartesian/Lockean idea of justification as fulfillment of epistemic duty or obligation is, of course, directly reflected in the work of those, who, like Bonjour, Cohen and, preeminently, Chisholm, see justification as epistemic responsibility or aptness for epistemic duty fulfillment. (To be responsible, after all, is to live up to ones duties and obligations.) It is instructive here to consider at a bit greater length the work of Roderick Chisholm, whose thought has quite properly dominated American epistemology for more than 30 years. Most of our contemporaries don't spend much time asking what justification *is*; they are less interested in an *analysis* of justification than in other questions, such as under what conditions a belief *has* justification. Chisholm is no exception. His principal interest, perhaps, has been in stating epistemological principles: non-contingent conditionals whose antecedents specify a non-epistemic relation between a person *S* and a proposition *A*, and whose consequents specify that *A* has a certain epistemic status for *S* — *certainty*, perhaps, or *acceptability*, or *being evident* or *being beyond reasonable doubt*. In stating these principles, of course, he is not saying what justification is, but saying instead under what nonepistemic conditions a given proposition has a given degree of it (for a given person). But he does also say what it is, and here he seems solidly in the tradition of Locke and Descartes. The classical Chisholm,¹⁹ concurs with the fundamental deontological intuition of Classical Internalism: there are epistemic duties or obligations or requirements. We human beings are rational creatures; we are capable of grasping concepts, believing propositions, and reasoning. Rational creatures — human beings, but also angels, alpha-Centaurians, what have you — are subject to epistemic duty or obligation; with ability comes responsibility. Justification, for a person is, in essence, being in the condition of having satisfied these duties or obligations.²⁰ And a

¹⁹ Roughly, the Chisholm from *Perceiving* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1957) to *The Foundations of Knowing*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982). Some of Chisholm's more recent work appears to take a different (and Brentanoesque) direction; his most recent work (the third edition of *Theory of Knowledge* [New York: Prentice Hall, 1989], for example, and his so far unpublished "Firth and the Ethics of Belief"), on the other hand, seems once more to fit with Classical Chisholmian Internalism.

belief is justified for a person, in essence, when holding that belief is apt for fulfilling those epistemic duties.

What, exactly, are those epistemic duties? Chisholm states the fundamental epistemic obligation or requirement differently in different places: thus in *Foundations of Knowing*,

Epistemic reasonability could be understood in terms of the general requirement to try to have the largest possible set of logically independent beliefs that is such that the true beliefs outnumber the false beliefs (p. 7);

but in *Theory of Knowledge* (2nd ed.),

We may assume that every person is subject to a purely intellectual requirement: that of trying his best to bring it about that for any proposition *p* he considers, he accepts *p* if and only if *p* is true. One might say that this is the person's responsibility or duty *qua* intellectual being. . . . One way, then, of re-expressing the locution '*p* is more reasonable than *q* for *S* at *t*' is to say this: '*S* is so situated at *t* that his intellectual requirement, his responsibility as an intellectual being, is better fulfilled by *p* than by *q*' (p. 14).

Neither of these is exactly right;²¹ but for present purposes the important point is that Chisholm sees us as subject to an epistemic obligation or requirement: to try to achieve a certain condition — call it 'epistemic excellence' — which consists in a certain relation to the truth; and justification depends on conformity to that duty. Chisholm also endorses, at least by implication, the First Internalist Motif. On his view it is sufficient for my beliefs' having justification for me that I do my epistemic duty, fulfill my epistemic obligation. But then whether my beliefs have positive epistemic status for me is up to me and within my control. All I have to do is my duty, which is to try to achieve epistemic excellence; and I can certainly try (whether or not I can actually succeed). The second motif is also reflected in Chisholm's thought. If you ask him what epistemic duty requires, he will presumably reply "that you try to achieve epistemic excellence." But then he is clearly speaking of objective duty. (Otherwise the right response would be, "Do whatever you nonculpably think is right.") But he also thinks, clearly enough, that if I don't try to achieve epistemic excellence (and this duty is not overridden by others) then I will be guilty: objective and subjective duty coincide. And the third motif is also reflected in Chisholm's way of thinking. My duty is to *try* to bring it about that I am in a state of intellectual excellence; my trying to do so is

²⁰ Of course this isn't exactly right; it would have to be stated much more carefully to have even a chance of being exactly right. For example, you can violate duty or obligation but still achieve justification — perhaps by way of expiatory activity, or perhaps by way of grace, as in the Christian doctrine of justification.

²¹ See my "Chisholmian Internalism," in *Philosophical Analysis: a Defense by Example*, ed. David Austin (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1988), p. 131.

something to which I have the right kind of cognitive access, and is also internal to me in the personal sense.

Of course Chisholm's view differs in crucial respects from the classical view of Descartes and Locke: for example, they limit knowledge to what is certain, but he does not. And this is an effect of an even deeper difference between Chisholm and, at any rate, Locke. For according to Chisholm justification is necessary and nearly sufficient for knowledge. Indeed, certainly, on Chisholm's view the highest degree of positive epistemic status, *just is* the highest degree of justification: a belief or proposition **A** is certain for me just if there is no other proposition such that believing it is more reasonable for me than believing **A** — that is (given his explanations of reasonability) just if there is no proposition such that I can better fulfill my epistemic duty by believing it than by believing **A**. Locke, on the other hand, doesn't think of justification as involved in that of which we are certain — self-evident beliefs, for example — and he also holds that knowledge is only of that of which we are certain.

Turn now to the second notion of the nature of justification: that it is or essentially involves having adequate evidence for the belief in question (Alston,²² Conee and Feldman, many others). According to the 'Evidentialism' of Conee and Feldman, you are justified in believing **B** just if you have sufficient evidence for it, or (as they put it) just if it fits your evidence. (Thus Conee: "Such examples make it reasonable to conclude that there is epistemic justification of a belief only where the person has cognitive access to evidence that supports the belief."²³) Indeed, this equation of being justified with having evidence is so pervasive that the justified true belief analysis of knowledge has often been put as the idea that you know if and only if your belief is true and you have adequate evidence for it.²⁴ Again, this is easily understood in terms of the original constellation of ideas surrounding justification to be found in Locke and Descartes. For them deontological epistemic justification is the central notion; and the central duty here, particularly in the case of Locke, is to believe a proposition that isn't certain for you (one that isn't self-evident or incorrigible) only if you have evidence for it — evidence, as they saw it, from propositions that are certain for you.

Two further points here. (a) Conee and Feldman do not make the deontological connection: they don't say that the *ratio essendi* of justification is duty fulfillment, with the chief duty being that of believing (or, more plausibly, trying to bring it about that you believe) only that which fits

²² See below, p. 67.

²³ *Monist* 71 (July, 1988), p. 398.

²⁴ E.g., in Chisholm's *Perceiving* (p. 16). In the first edition of *Theory of Knowledge*, however, he rejects that definition (p. 20).

your evidence. But there are plenty of contemporaries and near contemporaries who do. As we all know, W. K. Clifford (that “delicious *enfant terrible*,” as William James calls him) trumpets that “it is wrong, always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence”;²⁵ his is only the most strident in a vast chorus of voices insisting that the or a primary intellectual duty is that of believing only on the basis of evidence. (A few others in the choir: Sigmund Freud²⁶, Brand Blanshard²⁷, H. H. Price²⁸, Bertrand Russell²⁹, and Michael Scriven³⁰). And (b) there are two quite different possibilities for the evidentialist; she might be holding, on the one hand, that the very *nature* of justification is believing (or trying to bring it about that you believe) on the basis of evidence (that justification just *is* believing or trying to believe in that way) or she might hold, more plausibly, that the *nature* of justification is fulfillment of epistemic duty, the chief among those duties being that of believing or trying to believe only on the basis of evidence. (Since Conee and Feldman do not mention epistemic obligation, it seems likely that they are to be taken the first way.)

Lehrer and Cohen speak of epistemic justification as an evaluation of how well you have accomplished your epistemic goals. Here the idea is not that you have duties or obligations; it is rather that you have or may have epistemic goals: and you are justified to the degree that your epistemic behavior is a good way of attaining those goals. And here the word ‘rationality’ might be more appropriate than ‘justification’. What is really at issue here is *Zweckrationalität*, means-end rationality, appropriateness of your means to your goals. This notion is similar to Richard Foley’s conception of epistemic rationality, powerfully expounded in *The Theory of Epistemic Rationality*.³¹ Lehrer and Cohen’s notion isn’t directly connected with the classical deontological conception of justification; however it does have a sort of indirect connection. If you become doubtful that there are any specifically epistemic duties, or perhaps think there are some, but doubt that fulfilling them can play a large role in the formation and governance of belief, then this notion of means-ends rationality may

²⁵ “The Ethics of Belief” in *Lectures and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1879), p. 183.

²⁶ *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961 [first German edition 1927]), p. 32.

²⁷ *Reason and Belief* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 400 ff.

²⁸ *Belief* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1969), pp. 85 ff.

²⁹ “Give to any hypothesis which is worth your while to consider just that degree of credence which the evidence warrants” *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1945), p. 816.

³⁰ *Primary Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), pp. 102 ff.

³¹ Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

seem an attractive substitute. Perhaps there is no such thing as epistemic duty; even so, however, there is such a thing as pursuing your epistemic goals well or badly.

Finally, there is the conception of justification to be found in both the old and the new Goldman. According to the old Goldman (to a first approximation), a belief is justified if and only if it is produced by a reliable belief producing process or mechanism. According to the new, a belief is justified if it is the last item in a cognitive process which is licensed by a right set of J rules; and a set of J rules is right in case it has a high truth ratio in nearby possible worlds.³² Here I think there is little connection with the classical notion of justification as involving fulfillment of epistemic duty. True, in the later Goldman there is the notion of a *rule*, and of a process *permitted* by a rule. But rules of this sort have nothing to do with duty or obligation; there is nothing deontological about them. Goldman's use of the term, I think, is to be understood another way: suppose you just use the term 'justification' as a *name* for what is necessary for knowledge and (together with truth) sufficient for it up to Gettier problems; and suppose you also think, with Goldman, that fulfillment of epistemic duty, no matter how fervent and conscientious, is nowhere nearly sufficient for knowledge. Then you might find yourself using the term in just the way he uses it. Here there is only a fairly distant analogical connection with the classical conception.³³

So much for the main contemporary conceptions of justification; they can all be understood, I think, in terms of their relation to the classical deontological conception. But the same can be said for the contemporary connection between justification and internalism. According to Conee, "Justifying evidence must be internally available"; his idea is that the evidence in question can't be evidence you could get from the encyclopedia, for example, but must rather be evidence you can come up with just by reflection. Alston, furthermore, "find[s] widely shared and strong intuitions in favor of some kind of accessibility requirement for justification." Here there seems to be a clear connection with the classical connection between deontological justification and internalism in the epistemic sense. Of course internalism in the personal sense is also widespread (and this is what we should expect, given the relation between internalism in the two senses). Thus Lehrer and Cohen argue that reliabilism must be wrong about justification: "The truth of the demon hypothesis (where my beliefs

³² Above, p. 48.

³³ Another example of such a distant analogical connection: the internalism of John Pollock's *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986).

are mostly false) also entails that our experiences and our reasonings are just what they would be if our cognitive processes were reliable, and therefore, that we would be just as well justified in believing what we do if the demon hypothesis were true as if it were false” (above, p. 47). Here the idea, clearly, is that only what is internal to me as a knower in the personal sense, in the way in which my beliefs and experiences are, is relevant to justification; this may be understood, I think, as a sort of reflection of the connection between deontological justification and internalism to be found in the classical tradition. Note that an equivocation lurks here. Lehrer and Cohen think of justification a certain way (perhaps deontologically in the case of Cohen and perhaps in terms of means-ends rationality in the case of Lehrer and Cohen) and think justification so thought of is necessary for knowledge. Goldman, on the other hand, doesn't think justification thought of like *that* is necessary for knowledge; and *he* uses 'justification' more like a *name* for the property of quantity enough of which is sufficient (along with truth) for knowledge.

Now classical internalism has a certain deep integrity. The central notion is that we have epistemic duties or obligations; this induces internalism of both the epistemic and the nonepistemic sorts; and the central duty, Locke thinks, is to believe a proposition that is not certain only on the basis of evidence. Classical Chisholmian Internalism exhibits all of these features, except that according to Chisholm the central epistemic duty is to try to achieve epistemic excellence. Other contemporary accounts, however, sometimes seize on one or another of the elements of the classical package, often in such a way that the integrity of the original package is lost, or at least no longer clearly visible. Thus Conee and Feldman see justification as a matter of having adequate evidence, and hold that this evidence must be internally available to the believer; this makes sense if combined, as in Locke, with the idea that justification is fundamentally a deontological matter of duty fulfillment. They say nothing about the latter, however, which leaves the internalism unmotivated and the connection between the evidentialism and the internalism obscure.

Lehrer and Cohen speak of justification as “an evaluation of how well you have pursued your epistemic goals.” The internalism they display fits at best dubiously with this conception of justification. Suppose justification is an evaluation of how well you are pursuing your epistemic goals; it is then presumably an evaluation of the appropriateness of the means you use to the goals you choose. Suppose your doxastic goal is, e.g., believing truth, or attaining salvation, or achieving fame and fortune: why would there be any necessity that you be able to tell, just by reflection, let's say, how well suited your means are for achieving those goals? And

why think that only what pertains in a direct way to your experiences and beliefs is relevant to this question of how well those means fit those goals? What reason is there to think that an evaluation of how well you were pursuing your epistemic goals would have to measure something such that only your beliefs and your experiences would be relevant to it? The internalism of the classical conception lingers, but its root and foundation is no longer present.

Finally, I wish to consider William Alston's illuminating account of justification. Of all our contemporaries, Alston, I believe, is clearest and most perceptive about the nature of justification and its connection with epistemic duty and the other notions lurking in the neighborhood. Nevertheless the concept of justification that emerges from his work seems to me to be improperly unintegrated; it isn't clear to me that there is a good reason for picking out that particular notion as important for epistemology, or for our understanding of contemporary epistemology. Alston begins by asking the following question: what *is* this favorable status which, according to the central core of the idea of justification, accrues to a justified belief? Here he notes an important watershed:

As I see it, the major divide in this terrain has to do with whether believing and refraining from believing are subject to obligation, duty, and the like. If they are, we can think of the favorable evaluative status of a certain belief as consisting in the fact that in holding that belief one has fulfilled one's obligations, or refrained from violating one's obligations to achieve the fundamental aim in question [i.e., "the aim of maximizing truth and minimizing falsity in a large body of beliefs"]. If they are not so subject, the favorable status will have to be thought of in some other way.³⁴

There is a hint, here, that the notion of justification as a matter of permission, of freedom from blameworthiness, of fulfillment of epistemic duty and obligation — in a word, the classical deontological notion of justification — is more natural, or at any rate more familiar than alternatives. Elsewhere he gives considerably more than a hint:

I must confess that I do not find 'justified' an apt term for a favorable or desirable state or condition, when what makes it desirable is cut loose from considerations of obligation and blame. Nevertheless, since the term is firmly ensconced in the literature as the term to use for any concept that satisfies the four conditions [applicable to beliefs or believings, is positively evaluative and more specifically *epistemically* evaluative, and comes in degrees] set out in section II, I will stifle my linguistic scruples and employ it for a non-deontological concept.³⁵

Alston's scruples seem eminently warranted; it is only by way of some sort of analogical extension that the term 'justification' could properly be used for a non-deontological notion. Exploring the family of deontological

³⁴ "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," p. 59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86 (footnote 21).

ideas of justification with care and insight, Alston pays particular and subtle attention to the ways in which doxastic phenomena can be within our voluntary control. His verdict is that none of the deontological notions will do the job: even the most promising of the bunch, he says, "does not give us what we expect of epistemic justification. The most serious defect is that it does not hook up in the right way with an adequate, truth conducive ground. I may have done what could reasonably be expected of me in the management and cultivation of my doxastic life, and still hold a belief on outrageously inadequate grounds."³⁶

So the deontological answer to the question 'what sort of evaluation is involved in justification?' can't be right. "Perhaps it was misguided all along," he says, "to think of epistemic justification as freedom from blameworthiness. Is there any alternative, given the non-negotiable point that we are looking for a concept of epistemic evaluation?" (ibid., p. 69). The answer, of course, is that there are *many* alternatives. After another careful exploration of the field, he chooses his candidate:

S is J_{eg} [$'e'$ for 'evaluative' and $'g'$ for 'grounds'] justified in believing that p iff S's believing that p , as S did, was a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that S's belief that p was based on adequate grounds and S lacked sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary (ibid., p. 77).

So a justified belief is one that has adequate grounds. Alston adds that the justifying grounds in question must be accessible to the believer in question, thus honoring the classical connection between justification and internalism. In the classical case, as I have been arguing, there is a natural and inevitable connection between justification and accessibility, a connection rooted in the deontological conception of justification. Once one gives up the deontology, however, what is the reason or motivation for retaining the internalism? In support of the internalist requirement, Alston cites the fact that he finds

widely shared and strong intuitions in favor of some kind of accessibility requirement for justification. We expect that if there is something that justifies my belief that p , I will be able to determine what it is. We find something incongruous, or conceptually impossible, in the notion of my being justified in believing that p while totally lacking any capacity to determine what is responsible for that justification.³⁷

Again, this makes perfect sense if we think of justification deontologically; and the reason he finds those widespread intuitions favoring an internalist requirement, I suggest, is a testimony to the hold the classical conception has upon us; but once we give up that deontology, what is the

³⁶ Ibid., p. 67.

³⁷ "An Externalist's Internalism," *Synthese* 74 (March, 1988), p. 272.

reason for the internalism? *Is there any longer any reason for it?* Cut off the deontology, and the internalism looks like an arbitrary appendage.

Alston's conception of justification, I think, lacks the integrity of the classical conception. He clearly sees the incoherence of the 20th century received tradition, uniting as it does the notion that justification is necessary and nearly sufficient for knowledge, with the notion that justification is fundamentally a matter of doing one's epistemic duty. Looking (naturally enough) for a coherent conception, he turns to another notion. But why does he choose the one he does? Perhaps the idea is to find the (or a) closest coherent conception — that is, a conception that is coherent, and as similar to the 20th century tradition with respect to justification as any other coherent conception. Perhaps he's right; perhaps the concept he suggests is the closest coherent conception to the 20th century tradition with respect to justification: that doesn't guarantee that the conception in question helps us understand knowledge, or justification, or other important epistemological ideas.

IV. The Incoherence of the Received Tradition

Alston, I said, sees the incoherence of the received tradition; by way of conclusion, I shall argue briefly that the 20th century received epistemological tradition with respect to justification is indeed mistaken and incoherent. The shape of this tradition is clear: it involves first the idea that justification is necessary and nearly sufficient for knowledge; second, the idea that justification is fundamentally a matter of responsibility, of fulfillment of epistemic duty; third, the idea that justification for a belief essentially involves its fitting the believer's evidence, and fourth, the internalist connection. More than one element here is deeply questionable. For example, there is the question whether our beliefs are sufficiently within our control for deontological justification to have the right kind of bearing on belief formation and maintenance; I have little to add to Alston's discerning discussion of this question and shall therefore say nothing about it.

But second, conceding the tradition all it might like by way of control over our beliefs, it is still clear that justification is neither necessary for warrant nor anywhere nearly sufficient for it. First, it is nowhere nearly sufficient. It is not the case that justification is the fundamental component of warrant, with no more than an epicycle or quasi-technical codicil needed in order to mollify Gettier; not at all. Concede the dubious premiss that there are intellectual duties of the sort Locke and Chisholm suggest; concede the control over our beliefs that go with that idea: it is still easy to see, I think, that a person can be doing her epistemic duty to the maximum and nevertheless (by way of the depredations of a brain lesion or the

machinations of a Cartesian demon or alpha Centaurian cognitive scientist) be such that her beliefs have little or no warrant. I have given examples to prove this point elsewhere³⁸; here I shall give just one example.

Suppose our epistemic duty, as Chisholm puts it in *Foundations of Knowing*, is to “try to have the largest possible set of logically independent beliefs that is such that the true beliefs outnumber the false beliefs” — more generally, suppose our epistemic duty is to try to achieve epistemic excellence. And suppose further that I develop a rare sort of brain lesion that causes me to believe that I will be the next president of the United States. I have no evidence for that proposition, never having won or even run for public office; my only political experience was an unsuccessful bid for the vice-presidency of my sophomore class in college. Nevertheless, due to my cognitive dysfunction, the belief that I will be the next president seems to me obviously true — as obvious as the most obvious truths of elementary logic or arithmetic; it has all the phenomenological panache of *Modus Ponens* itself. Now: am I so situated that I can better fulfill my obligation to the truth by *withholding* than by accepting this proposition? Surely not. That I will be the next president seems to me to be utterly and obviously true, as obvious as $2 + 1 = 3$; and I haven’t the slightest awareness that my cognitive faculties are playing me false here. So if I am trying to achieve epistemic excellence, I will put this proposition down among the ones I accept. The way for me to try to achieve epistemic excellence in these circumstances, surely, is for me to act on what I (nonculpably) believe about how best to achieve this end. But this proposition seems obviously true to me; so, naturally enough, I believe that the way to achieve epistemic excellence here is to accept it. We may add that I am exceptionally dutiful, enormously concerned with my epistemic duty; I am eager to bring it about that I am in the right relation to the truth, and am trying my level best to do so; indeed, I am fanatical on the subject and devote most of my energy to trying to achieve epistemic excellence. Then, surely, I am doing my epistemic duty in accepting the proposition in question; nevertheless that proposition has little by way of warrant or positive epistemic status for me. Even if, by some mad chance, I will in fact be the next president, I surely do not know that I will be.

So justification isn’t sufficient for warrant. But it isn’t necessary either.³⁹ Suppose there is the sort of epistemic duty Chisholm suggests: a

³⁸ “Chisholm Internalism,” in *Philosophical Analysis: a Defense by Example*, ed. David Austin (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1987); “Justification and Theism,” *Faith and Philosophy*, October, 1987; “Positive Epistemic Status and Proper Function” in *Philosophical Perspectives*, 2; *Epistemology*, 1988, ed. James Tomberlin (Atascadero, California: Ridgeview Publishing Co., 1988); and *Warrant* (not committed for publication).

³⁹ Unless, of course, *there are* no epistemic duties to regulate and maintain beliefs in a cer-

duty to try to bring it about that I attain and maintain the condition of epistemic excellence; and suppose I am dutiful, but a bit confused. I come nonculpably to believe that the alpha Centaurians thoroughly dislike the thought that I am perceiving something that is red; I also believe that they are monitoring my beliefs, and if I form the belief that I see something red, will bring it about that I have a set of beliefs most of which are absurdly false, thus depriving me of any chance for epistemic excellence. I then acquire an epistemic duty to try to withhold the beliefs I naturally form when I am appeared to redly: such beliefs as that I see a red ball, or a red fire engine, or whatever. I have the same epistemic inclinations everyone else has: when I am appeared to redly, I am powerfully inclined to believe that I see something that is red. By dint of heroic and unstinting effort, however, I am able to train myself to withhold the belief (on such occasions) that I see something red; of course it takes enormous effort and requires great willpower. On a given morning I go for a walk in London; I am appeared to redly several times (postboxes, traffic signals, redcoats practising for a re-enactment of the American revolution); each time I successfully resist the belief that I see something red, but only at the cost of prodigious effort. I become exhausted, and resentful. Finally I am appeared to redly in a particularly flagrant and insistent fashion by a large red London bus. “To hell with epistemic duty” I say, and relax blissfully into the belief that I am now perceiving something red. Then this would be a belief that was unjustified for me; in accepting it I would be going contrary to epistemic duty; yet could it not constitute knowledge?⁴⁰

tain way. If there are no such duties, then any belief is automatically and trivially justified.

⁴⁰ There is a second incoherence in the received tradition (or perhaps a special case of the first). According to that tradition, justification in many areas requires evidence; if I am to be justified in accepting the view that the earth is round, for example, I must have evidence of some sort — testimonial evidence, if nothing else. Now on the one hand justification is supposed to be sufficient or nearly sufficient for warrant. But on the other, if a belief of mine is to have warrant for me by virtue of being accepted on the basis of some ground, then that ground must be appropriately related to the belief in question. And the problem for the received view is one that is by now familiar; I can be deontologically justified in believing *A* on the basis of *B* even if *B* is not appropriately related to *A* at all. I may be doing my level best; I may be performing works of magnificent epistemic supererogation; even so (by virtue of epistemic malfunction) I may believe *A* on the basis of a ground that is ludicrously inadequate. Perhaps (by virtue of demon, tumor or alpha-Centaurian) I believe that Feike can swim on the basis of the ‘ground’ that 9/10 Frisians cannot swim and Feike is a Frisian; and perhaps I am doing my epistemic duty *in excelsis* in the entire situation and have done so all my life. Clearly warrant requires that the ground in question really *be* evidence of one sort or another; but I can be deontologically completely justified in believing on the basis of a ground that is in fact no evidence at all.

According to the 20th century received tradition in Anglo-American epistemology — a tradition going back at least to Locke — justification is essentially deontological; it is also necessary and nearly sufficient for warrant. But this position is deeply incoherent: epistemic justification (taken in traditional deontological fashion) may be an important epistemic value or virtue, but it is neither necessary nor anywhere nearly sufficient for knowledge. Knowledge surely contains a normative element; but the normativity is not that of deontology.⁴¹ Perhaps this incoherence in the received tradition is the most important thing to see here: the tension between the idea that justification is a deontological matter, a matter of fulfilling duties, being permitted or within one's rights, conforming to one's intellectual obligations, on the one hand; and, on the other, the idea that justification is necessary and sufficient (perhaps with a codicil to propitiate Gettier) for warrant. To put it another way, what we need to see clearly is the vast difference between justification and warrant. The lesson to be learned is that these two are not merely uneasy bedfellows; they are worlds apart.⁴²

⁴¹ In *Warrant* (forthcoming, I hope) I argue that the sort of normativity involved is that connected with the notion of proper function. Thus, for example, your heart ought to pump at between 50 and 75 strokes per minute at rest; and you ought to be able to see that if all men are mortal and Socrates is a man, then he is mortal.

⁴² I don't mean to suggest, of course, that no one else has seen this point. On the contrary; it has been seen clearly by, for example, William Alston, Fred Dretske, Alvin Goldman, Ernest Sosa, and others.