

Reliabilism and First- and Second-Order Skepticism*

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One reliabilist option against the problem of bootstrapping is to argue that circular reasoning is bad, but reliabilism can avoid circular reasoning. Vogel dismisses this option on the grounds that reliabilists need circular reasoning in order to circumvent skepticism. Briesen argues, however, that although reliabilists need circular reasoning to block second-order skepticism, they do not need it to block first-order skepticism. But I argue in this paper that reliabilists cannot legitimately reject first-order skepticism unless they can block second-order skepticism. In particular, I argue that reliabilists cannot meet the non-undermining provision for justification unless they can somehow block second-order skepticism.

Subject Epistemology

Key words reliabilism, the problem of easy knowledge, first-order skepticism, second-order skepticism, Briesen, Vogel

1. Introductory Remarks

According to reliabilism, an epistemic source K can yield knowledge for a subject S, even if S does not know that K is reliable. In his 2000 paper ‘Reliabilism Leveled’, Jonathan Vogel argues that this feature of reliabilism permits what he calls ‘bootstrapping problem’, which enables us to know the reliability of an epistemic source in such a way that is intuitively far too easy. Defenders of reliabilism against the problem of easy knowledge (or bootstrapping) have two types of options. One is to accept that reliabilism does not rule out circular reasoning, but to argue that this kind of reasoning is not as epistemologically bad as it seems. The other is to admit that circular reasoning is epistemologically bad, but to argue nonetheless that reliabilism can avoid this kind of reasoning. There is an important obstacle to taking the second option, however. Vogel considers this option but dismisses it partly due to the following reason. One of the main motivations for reliabilism consists in being able to circumvent skepticism, and reliabilists need circular reasoning to block skepticism; thus, if reliabilists take the second option, then they will lose an important motivation for their view, namely circumventing skepticism.¹⁾ However, in his 2013 paper “Reliabilism, Bootstrapping, and Epistemic Circularity”, Jochen Briesen suggests a ‘divide and conquer’ approach to this obstacle, while claiming that the reasons against the second option are not as convincing as widely assumed. On his proposal, although reliabilists need circular reasoning to block second-order skepticism, they do not need it to block first-order skepticism. In particular, he argues that reliabilists can block first-order skeptical argument by dismissing the internalist principle that evidence is a necessary condition for justification. He also argues that being

1) See Vogel 2000, pp. 616-619.

able to block only first-order skepticism is good enough for reliabilism.

The purpose of this paper is to show that Briesen's 'divide and conquer' approach is not successful. For this purpose, I will argue along the following lines. Briesen wants to argue that reliabilists can reject the internalist principle that evidence is necessary for justification, without recourse to any kind of circular reasoning. The question then is, on what grounds can the reliabilists reject the internalist principle? In response to this question, they might appeal to the alleged 'Founding Insight' of reliabilism, according to which true belief can amount to genuine knowledge even when the candidate knower is unable to offer a suitable justification. For example, a child can know that there is an apple in front of her, although she is unable to offer a suitable justification for this perceptual belief. I will argue, however, that the reliabilists cannot defend the alleged 'Founding Insight' of reliabilism unless they can somehow block second-order skepticism. As we will see in due course, the reliabilists admit that just reliably formed true belief is insufficient for justification. On the so-called 'non-undermining provision for justification', which they admit as a supplementary condition for justification, to be justified in holding a belief, the subject must not have a reason to believe that he or she is not permitted to hold the belief. I will argue that the reliabilists cannot meet this supplementary condition unless they find a way to block second-order skepticism. Along these lines, contrary to Briesen's claim, I will argue that reliabilists should not respond to the bootstrapping problem by claiming that they can block first-order skepticism in a non-circular way, while simultaneously admitting that second-order skepticism cannot be blocked.

2. First- and Second-Order Skepticism

As mentioned in the previous section, Briesen distinguishes between first-order skepticism and second-order skepticism. On first-order skepticism, we are not justified in believing anything about the world around us. By contrast, on second-order skepticism, we have no positive reason or evidence to determine whether or not our first-order beliefs are reliably produced. As noted, one reliabilist option in the face of the problem of easy knowledge (or bootstrapping) is to admit that circular reasoning is epistemologically bad, but to claim nonetheless that reliabilism can avoid this kind of reasoning. Suppose that *S* is a reliabilist who intends to take this option. Briesen wants to show that *S* can block first-order skepticism, despite the fact that she cannot block second-order skepticism (in a non-circular way).

Let *p* be a proposition concerning the external world, and let $\neg sh$ be the proposition that the skeptical hypothesis is false. Consider the following first-order skeptical argument (α):

- (p1) If *S* is justified in believing *p*, then she is justified in believing $\neg sh$.
- (p2) *S* is not justified in believing $\neg sh$.
 - (1) If *S* is justified in believing $\neg sh$, then she is justified in believing $\neg sh$ by evidence.
 - (2) *S* is not justified in believing $\neg sh$ by empirical evidence.
 - (3) *S* is not justified in believing $\neg sh$ by non-empirical evidence.
 - (4) All evidence is either empirical or non-empirical.
 - (5) Therefore, *S* is not justified in believing $\neg sh$.
- (C) Hence, *S* is not justified in believing *p*.

According to Briesen, *S* can reject sub-premise (1) of (p2). For this

sub-premise depends on the internalist principle that evidence is a necessary condition for justification. On the basis of this point, he claims that S can block the above first-order skeptical argument by dismissing the sub-premise, without recourse to any kind of circular reasoning.

Let us now turn to second-order skepticism. Let $P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n$ be the conjunction of all of the premises of a valid skeptical argument, and let C be its conclusion. Moreover, let J be the justification-operator. And then consider the following second-order skeptical argument (β):

- (i) $(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n) \rightarrow C$
- (ii) $\neg C \rightarrow \neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n)$
- (iii) $J(\neg C \rightarrow \neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n))$
- (iv) $[J(\neg C) \& J(\neg C \rightarrow \neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n))] \rightarrow J(\neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n))$
- (v) $J(\neg C) \rightarrow J(\neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n))$
- (vi) $\neg J(\neg(P_1 \& P_2 \& \dots P_n)) \rightarrow \neg J(\neg C)$

Here (i) says that the skeptical premises imply the skeptical conclusion. By assumption, this skeptical argument is valid. And (ii) is its contraposition. Accordingly, we are justified in believing (ii). This is what (iii) says. (iv) is an instance of the closure principle of justification, which most reliabilists accept.²⁾ (v) follows from (iii) and (iv). Finally, (vi) is the contraposition of (v), and it says that if S is not justified in believing that at least one of the skeptical premises is false, then she is not justified in believing that the skeptical conclusion is false. Therefore, to counter this second-order skeptical argument, S needs to reject the antecedent of (vi). Consequently,

2) We can state the closure principle of justification as follows: If you are justified in believing that p , and you can tell that p only if q , then you are justified in believing that q .

in order to block second-order skepticism, it is not enough for S to argue just that one of the skeptical premises is unmotivated. Instead, S has to argue that she is justified in believing that at least one of the skeptical premises is false. Due to this reason, as for the aforementioned skeptical argument (α), Briesen concedes to Vogel that S has to argue that she is justified in believing that (p2) is actually false.

On Vogel's view, S can show that she is justified in believing $\neg sh$ (e.g., that S is not a brain-in-a-vat) only by virtue of a Neo-Moorean argument of the following sort:

- (vii) It appears to me as though I have a hand.
- (viii) I have a hand.
- (ix) Therefore, my appearance of having a hand is veridical.
- (x) Therefore, I am not a brain-in-a-vat (Therefore, $\neg sh$ is true).

Suppose that S forms a phenomenal belief such as (vii) by perception. As a reliabilist, she can take perception as a reliable belief-forming process. Consequently, she can take (viii) to be justified. Both (ix) and (x) are derived from (vii) and (viii). Therefore, S can take it that she is justified in believing $\neg sh$. But the problem is that the justification of (viii) already presupposes the truth of (x). Hence, to block second-order skepticism, Vogel argues, S needs to rely on some kind of circular reasoning.³⁾

Briesen admits that one of the main motivations for reliabilism consists in being able to block skepticism, and also that reliabilists cannot block second-order skepticism without recourse to circular reasoning. Let S be a reliabilist who follows Briesen's suggestion mentioned before. On Briesen's view, S can even accept that her belief in $\neg sh$ cannot be shown

3) Cf. Vogel 2000, pp. 618-619.

to be justified. If S's belief in $\neg sh$ were shown to be justified then it would be possible that she is justified in believing that her belief in $\neg sh$ is justified. But, by assumption, S takes circular reasoning to be epistemologically bad, and S cannot block second-order skepticism in a non-circular way. Therefore, on his view, it cannot be shown that S's belief in $\neg sh$ is justified, although her belief in $\neg sh$ might be justified by virtue of some reliable belief-forming process. He says:

Hence, [reliabilists] are committed to the assumption that if S's belief in $\neg sh$ is justified at all, it is not justified by the Neo-Moorean process of reasoning— or more precisely, if S's belief in $\neg sh$ is justified, then the process that led S to believe $\neg sh$ cannot be the Neo-Moorean reasoning process specified above. But this assumption does not imply that S's belief in $\neg sh$ is unjustified— after all, the belief could be formed by some other supposedly reliable process P . Now, a reliabilist might even accept that this process P cannot be identified, thereby accepting that it implies that it cannot be proven that the skeptical premise (p2) is false. But again, this at most invites problems of second-order skepticism. It does not threaten the reliabilist antiskeptical-strategy with respect to first-order skepticism.⁴⁾

Unlike the case of second-order skepticism, Briesen claims that S can block first-order skepticism in a non-circular way. This is because S can block first-order skepticism by rejecting sub-premise (1) of (α) .

Vogel's criticism of option (II) rests on the assumption that reliabilists are committed to epistemically circular reasoning to block the skeptical argument. At least with respect to arguments of first-order skepticism, it can be shown that this assumption is simply wrong. Nevertheless, it still appears that reliabilists are committed to circular reasoning in answering problems of

4) Briesen 2013, p. 4370.

second-order skepticism. Hence, if reliabilists claim that circular reasoning is not a reliable belief-forming mechanism..., then they can answer first- but not second-order skepticism. But this does not discredit the motivation of their theory. Being able to block first-order skeptical arguments is good enough.⁵⁾

Along these lines, Briesen argues that reliabilists can block first-order skepticism without recourse to circular reasoning, and also that being able to block only first-order skepticism can still be considered as an important virtue of reliabilism.

3. The Non-undermining Provision for Justification

As we discussed in the previous section, Briesen claims that reliabilists in the face of the problem of easy knowledge can block first-order skepticism in a non-circular way, although they cannot avoid second-order skepticism. In this section I will argue, however, that reliabilists cannot block first-order skepticism unless they find a way to block second-order skepticism.

To begin with, reliabilists admit that just reliably formed true belief is insufficient for justification. Laurence Bonjour presents the following well-known example.⁶⁾ Suppose that Norman has a reliable power of clairvoyance, but he has no reason or evidence whatsoever for believing that he possesses the power. Nonetheless, one day, he forms a belief that the President is in New York City by employing his power of clairvoyance. Bonjour argues that Norman in this case isn't justified in holding the belief. This is because it is irrational for him to hold such a belief on the

5) *Ibid.*, pp. 4366-4367.

6) Cf. Bonjour 1980, p. 62.

basis of the power he has no reason whatsoever to possess. In a similar vein, Keith Lehrer presents the case of Mr. Truetemp.⁷⁾ Mr. Truetemp has a temperature-detecting device implanted in his head to the effect that he automatically forms accurate beliefs about the ambient temperature, but he knows nothing about the temperature-detecting device in his head. Suppose that Mr. Truetemp now automatically forms an accurate belief about the ambient temperature. Lehrer argues that Mr. Truetemp is not justified in holding the belief. This is because he has no reason whatsoever to think that his belief about the ambient temperature is trustworthy. For these reasons, reliabilists admit that a reliability-based condition needs to be strengthened for justification. Notably, Alvin Goldman suggests a ‘non-undermining provision for justification’ as a supplementary condition.⁸⁾ He says:

What she believes ... is such that *if* it were true, the beliefs in question (her visually formed beliefs) *would not* be permitted by a right rule system. Satisfaction of this condition, I now propose, is sufficient to undermine permittedness. In other words, it is sufficient for undermining that a cognizer believes that certain conditions obtain which, if they did obtain, would entail that the target beliefs are not permitted by a right rule system. The cognizer need not actually have any beliefs about rule systems, rightness, or criteria of rightness. (Goldman 1986, p. 111)

On this suggestion, to be justified in holding a belief, a person must not have a reason to believe that he is not permitted to hold the belief. If he had such a reason, then his justification for holding the belief would be undermined. This non-undermining provision could handle the aforementioned

7) Cf. Lehrer 1990, pp. 163-164.

8) Cf. Goldman 1986, pp. 111-112.

clairvoyance and Truetemp cases. We may say that Norman has a reason to believe that he is not permitted to hold his belief about the location of the President, because he knows that he has no reason or evidence whatsoever to believe that he has the power of clairvoyance. In a similar vein, Mr. Truetemp has a reason to believe that he is not permitted to hold his belief about the ambient temperature. This is because he knows nothing about the temperature-detecting device in his head, and so he has no reason or evidence whatsoever to think that his beliefs about the ambient temperature are trustworthy.

In what follows, I will argue that reliabilists cannot meet the above non-undermining provision for justification unless they can somehow block second-order skepticism. As mentioned in the previous section, second-order skepticism tells us that we have no positive reason or evidence to determine whether or not our first-order beliefs are reliably produced. Let us now consider a crystal-ball gazer who forms beliefs on the basis of her crystal-ball gazing, although she has no reason or evidence for the reliability of her crystal-ball gazing. Suppose that she now believes a proposition p on the basis of her crystal-ball gazing. Given second-order skepticism, she has to admit that she has no reason whatsoever for the reliability of her crystal-ball gazing. What she knows is just that it could be either reliable or unreliable. According to the principle of indifference, then, she should regard these two alternatives as equally likely because she has no positive evidence for either of them. In other words, there is just a fifty-fifty chance that p is true, and a fifty-fifty chance that p is false. What is an epistemologically right thing for her to do in such a case? It is important to observe at this point that she can take three cognitive attitudes towards a proposition: taking it as true, taking it as false, or withholding judgment on it. If she has good

reason for p , she can take it as true. If she has good reason against p , she can take it as false. If, however, she has neither reason for p nor reason against p , what she should do is to withhold judgment on it. Accordingly, since the crystal-ball gazer has no reason to believe that her crystal-ball gazing is a reliable belief-forming process, she should withhold judgment on beliefs that are produced by this process. She would be epistemologically irresponsible if she did not take this withholding attitude. Besides, in order to judge that one's belief in p is reliably produced, the chance of p being true should be at least better than fifty-fifty. Therefore, the fact that there is just a fifty-fifty chance of p being true provides the subject with a reason to withhold judgment about p rather than holding it. In addition, the crystal-ball gazing case is not really different from the aforementioned clairvoyance and Truetemp cases. Like the latter cases, the crystal-ball gazer has no reason whatsoever to think that her belief-forming process in question is reliable. Along these lines, we may argue that the crystal-ball gazer has a reason to believe that she is not permitted to hold the belief in question. Thus, the fact that the crystal-ball gazer has no reason whatsoever for the reliability of her crystal-ball gazing provides her with a reason to not accept the belief that results from her crystal-ball gazing.

Now it is also important to notice that the above point can be generalized for virtually any cognitive process. As a typical cognitive process, consider your perceptual mechanism. Given second-order skepticism, you have to admit that you have no reason or evidence whatsoever for the reliability of your perceptual mechanism. What you know is just that it could be either reliable or unreliable. According to the principle of indifference, then, you should regard these two alternatives as equally likely. As pointed out above, we can say that the fact that the

crystal-ball gazer has no reason whatsoever for the reliability of her crystal-ball gazing provides her with a reason to not accept the belief that results from her crystal-ball gazing. Recall that the chance of a belief being true should be at least better than fifty-fifty in order to claim that it is reliably produced. Likewise, we may say that the fact that you have no reason whatsoever for the reliability of your perceptual mechanism provides you with a reason to believe that you are not permitted to hold beliefs that result from this cognitive process. Along these lines, we may argue that you are not even justified in holding ordinary perceptual beliefs, insofar as second-order skepticism cannot be blocked. If my arguments so far are on the right track, we can claim that reliabilists cannot meet the non-undermining provision for justification unless they can somehow block second-order skepticism.

Let me add another reason why reliabilists cannot block first-order skepticism insofar as they cannot block second-order skepticism. It is important to notice that we cannot successfully engage in epistemic discourse unless there are some justified reasons we can employ to defend our own beliefs or to criticize other's beliefs. Consider a case where you criticize someone's belief, say S's belief in p , by presenting some reasons against it. If S does not accept those reasons as legitimate, she will dismiss your criticism as groundless. In other words, S can dismiss your criticism by claiming that you lack legitimate grounds for judging that the belief in question is not reliably produced. Thus, in order to criticize S's belief in p , you must assume that you have justified beliefs on the basis of which you can judge that her belief in p is not reliably produced. Given second-order skepticism, however, you have no positive reason or evidence whatsoever to determine whether your belief-forming processes are reliable or not. As a consequence, you would lack legitimate reasons

which you can employ in order to successfully criticize S's belief. This means that our epistemic discourse is undermined if we do not have any reason or evidence about the reliability of our belief-forming process. In this regard, it is worth noting that you are in the same epistemic boat as the aforementioned crystal-ball gazer, so that if your perceptual beliefs are allowed then her beliefs based on crystal-ball gazing should likewise be allowed. Consequently, you can be subject to the following criticism. It is just a matter of luck that your first-order beliefs based on your perceptual mechanism are likely to be true. Thus, for the same reason that the crystal-ball gazer's beliefs should not be taken to be justified, your perceptual beliefs should not be taken to be justified either. Hence, insofar as reliabilists cannot block second-order skepticism, they cannot block first-order skepticism.

4. The Founding Insight of Reliabilism and the Minimum Condition for Our Epistemic Discourse

In this section I will argue that reliabilists cannot successfully defend the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight insofar as they cannot block second-order skepticism.

On Briesen's proposal, reliabilists can block first-order skepticism by denying the internalist principle that evidence is a necessary condition for justification, although they cannot avoid second-order skepticism in a non-circular way. The question then is, on what grounds can the reliabilists reject this epistemic principle? In response to this question, they would presumably appeal to the alleged Founding Insight of reliabilism, which is explained below.

Let us consider an ordinary perceptual belief of a child, for instance, a belief that an apple is in front of her. Suppose that this child is unable

to offer a suitable justification for this belief, partly because she is not yet epistemologically sophisticated. Even in such a case, we may say that the child knows (or is justified in believing) that there is an apple in front of her. We want to distinguish knowledge from mere guess because it is unwise to rely on mere guesses in our pursuit of the epistemic goal. And the child's perceptual mechanism is presumably a reliable belief-forming process. Consequently, the child's perceptual belief in question is likely to be true, because it is based not on a mere guess, but presumably on a reliable cognitive process. In addition, most of our everyday, garden-variety knowledge depend on perceptual beliefs of this sort. Thus, according to the reliabilist, true beliefs can amount to genuine knowledge even when the candidate knower is unable to offer a suitable justification. Following Robert Brandom, let us call this claim "the 'Founding Insight' of reliabilist epistemologies".⁹⁾

As we will see below, however, reliabilists cannot defend the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight insofar as they cannot block second-order skepticism.

To begin with, it is worth noticing that a belief which nobody can successfully defend should not be taken as justified in our epistemic discourse. If we give up this condition, then we will be led to an epistemic disaster in which anyone can stubbornly stick to his or her own belief, even if there is no reason or evidence whatsoever for the belief. Thus, we may regard this as a minimum condition for our epistemic discourse. In addition, it is also important to observe that this minimum condition for our epistemic discourse does not require that each member of our epistemic community be able to defend his or her belief alone in order that he or she is justified in holding it. This is mainly because one

9) Brandom 2000, p. 97.

can defer to legitimate authorities in the matter of justification by appealing to the division of epistemic labor. Therefore, the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight are compatible with the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse. I will say more on this point shortly.

Now suppose that second-order skepticism holds. Then we have no positive reason or evidence to determine whether or not our first-order beliefs are reliably produced, and so we lack legitimate reasons which we can employ in order to defend any of our first-order beliefs. Recall that, given second-order skepticism, it is just a matter of luck that our first-order beliefs are formed by reliable cognitive processes. If so, nobody can successfully defend any of our first-order beliefs. Then, according to the aforementioned minimum condition for our epistemic discourse, any of our beliefs about the world should not be taken to be justified in our epistemic discourse. In addition, recall that reliabilists cannot meet the non-undermining provision for justification unless they can block second-order skepticism. To put it another way, second-order skepticism undermines the reliabilist justification conferred on the outputs of a belief-forming process. Therefore, if the reliabilists cannot block second-order skepticism, they cannot defend the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight because these cases violate not only the non-undermining provision for justification, but also the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse.

In the remainder of this section, I will explain why the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight are compatible with the aforementioned minimum condition for our epistemic discourse. On a Sellarsian social practice model of justification, the concept of *being justified in holding a belief* has been developed on the basis of our social practice of demanding justification and responding to such demands.¹⁰⁾ In addition, our social practice of justification requires the ‘default and challenge’ structure of

10) Cf. Sellars 1963; see also Lee 2008.

justification, for the infinite regress of justification is impossible.¹¹⁾ On this view, in order for it to be possible that one defends something, some claims must be treated as having default justification (unless challengers provide some positive reason to doubt them). That is, there must be some claims for which the burden of proof is shifted to challengers. And this social practice model of justification requires that something play the role of evidence or ground. If nothing played such role, one could not defend one's claim in response to a challenge. What, then, plays such role? Without reliable perceptual judgments, we would have no evidence for how things are in the world. Thus, our social practice of justification requires that our ordinary perceptual judgments have default justification. In other words, we are justified in holding our ordinary perceptual judgments unless we are given positive reasons to doubt them; e.g., we are having a hallucination under the influence of a drug.¹²⁾

An important feature of this social practice model of justification is that it allows a case where a person can be justified in holding a belief even when she herself cannot offer a suitable justification for it. This is mainly because we can rely on the division of epistemic labor in our social practice of justification. For example, consider Einstein's most famous

11) See Brandom 1994, esp. pp. 204-206; see also Lee 2008.

12) On this view, a perceptual judgment can serve as *evidence* for further, non-perceptual claims, and it can be subject to *rational criticism* as well. If there is some positive reason to doubt a perceptual judgment, we can legitimately challenge it. In this sense, perceptual judgments are essentially epistemically evaluable. In addition, there is no possibility of assessing particular perceptual judgments except against a rich body of background knowledge. Consequentially, nobody can have only perceptual knowledge. Therefore, this view denies a foundationalist view that there can be a *freestanding* body of perceptual knowledge in the sense that such perceptual knowledge does not serve as epistemic reasons for non-perceptual knowledge and also in the sense that the former is semantically independent of the latter. For a detailed discussion and defense of this view, see Lee 2008 and Lee 2014.

equation 'E = MC²', which says that the universal proportionality factor between equivalent amounts of energy and mass is equal to the speed of light squared. Although I, as a non-expert in physics, cannot offer a suitable justification for this proposition, I am nonetheless entitled to hold it. This is because this belief has a positive justificational status in our social practice of justification, and also because I can meet the demand for justification by deferring to the relevant physicists in this matter. In this regard, it is worth noting that one's reliance on legitimate authority is not fallacious. In addition to such theoretical knowledge, I possess a lot of non-theoretical knowledge not only through others' testimonies but also through newspapers and television. For all these information, I can also rely on the division of epistemic labor. Keeping this point in mind, consider again the aforementioned perceptual belief of a child, namely her belief that there is an apple in front of her. We can take the child's belief to be justified on the grounds that such an ordinary perceptual belief has default justification in our social practice of justification and also that the child can be taken to be implicitly deferring to the appropriate adult members of her community in the matter of justification.. Let me elaborate.

To begin with, under normal circumstances in which there is an apple in front of us, we can make a perceptual judgment such as 'there is an apple in front of me' by observing an apple in front of us. As mentioned before, our social practice of justification requires that such an ordinary perceptual judgment have default justification in our social practice of justification. And the reason why people could normally agree on such ordinary perceptual judgments is mainly due to our language training mechanism. Due to this mechanism, when we are in an ordinary perceptual situation such that there is an apple in front of us, we can describe the situation as 'there is an apple in front of me'. This is because

we have received language training so as to use the same language in the same linguistic community. Notice that the meaning of a linguistic expression is constituted by its language rules, which prescribe how to use it, and that we are all trained to follow language rules such as the one that one ought to apply the expression ‘apple’ to an observed object when and only when it is an apple. Consequently, we are bound to make similar perceptual judgments when we are in a similar perceptual situation, unless we are in abnormal states such as being dead drunk or suffering from a hallucination under the influence of a drug.

Why is it then that a child can be taken to be implicitly deferring to the appropriate adult members of her community in the matter of justification? The first thing to note is that children are members of our linguistic community. As a result, they are all trained to make perceptual judgments in such a way that their judgments would coincide with adults’ judgments in similar situations. Due to this kind of language training mechanism, if a child has received a sufficient amount of language training, and she is in an ordinary perceptual situation that p , then she can describe the situation as the case that p . Consequently, the aforementioned child’s ordinary perceptual judgment that there is an apple in front of her is likely to coincide with our ordinary perceptual judgment in a similar perceptual situation. The second thing to note is that such language learning includes learning not only to make questions, but also to answer questions; to put it another way, it includes learning not only to demand justification for questionable claims, but also to respond to such demands. Thus, to say that one becomes a member of a linguistic community is tantamount to saying that one becomes a member of an epistemic community as well. Most importantly, we should note that when a child is in the process of learning her own language, she is not yet a

full-fledged member of her linguistic community. Thus, she ought to follow what the language trainers would tell her to say in the matter of what she ought to say in a given situation. It is in this sense that a child can be taken to be implicitly deferring to the language trainers in the matter of what she ought to say. In a similar vein, we can say that the child is a member of our epistemic community, although she is not yet its full-fledged member. It takes time and experience before she becomes a full-fledged participant in our social practice of justification. Nonetheless, she can make a response such as ‘I can see a red apple’, when asked why she thinks that there is an apple in front of her. In addition, if some adult points out that what the child is taking as an apple is in fact an imitation apple, and explains appropriately why it is not a real apple, the child should give up her belief that there is an apple in front of her. It is in this sense that the child can be taken to be implicitly deferring to the appropriate adult members of her community in the matter of justification. In other words, in the matter of what the child ought to believe in a given epistemic situation, she can be taken to be implicitly deferring to the appropriate adult members. Due to these reasons, with regard to the aforementioned belief that there is an apple in front of the child, we can evaluate the child’s belief as justified on the grounds that this perceptual belief has default justification in our social practice of justification and also that we can take the child to be implicitly deferring to us in the matter of justification.¹³⁾

13) Here we may admit that it is not in the full-fledged sense of justification that we can take the child’s belief to be justified. When asked why she thinks that there is an apple in front of her, the child could be too young to make a proper reply such as ‘I can see an apple’. On Sellars’s view, even in some such cases, we might say that the child knows that there is an apple in front of her. But, in those cases, we are employing an *analogical* sense of knowledge. In other words, we can treat the child’s mental activities as like ours, and so we can interpret the

Along these lines, we may argue that the child is justified in believing that there is an apple in front of her, despite the fact that she herself presumably would not consider whether or not this perceptual belief is indeed reliably formed. It is important to notice at this point that this fact does not refute the aforementioned minimum condition for our epistemic discourse, namely that a belief which nobody can defend should not be taken to be justified in our epistemic discourse. Recall that the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse does not require that each member of our epistemic community be able to defend his or her belief alone in order that he or she is justified in holding it. We can explicitly or implicitly defer to legitimate authorities in the matter of justification by appealing to the division of epistemic labor. Therefore, the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight do not refute the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse.

Let me make one cautionary remark here. It is not my goal to defend the aforementioned social practice model of justification here.¹⁴⁾ My point is just that this model of justification helps us see why the Founding Insight of reliabilism does not refute the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse.¹⁵⁾ In addition, we can make the alleged cases for the

epistemic status of her belief as analogous to the epistemic status of our belief in a similar situation. Cf. Sellars 1975, p. 304: “Thus, our common-sense understanding of what sub-conceptual thinking—e.g., that of babies and animals—consists in, involves viewing them as engage in ‘rudimentary’ forms of conceptual thinking. We interpret their behavior using conceptual thinking as a model in *ad hoc* and unsystematic ways which really amount to the introduction of a new notion which is nevertheless labeled ‘thinking’. Such analogical extensions of concepts, when supported by experience, are by no means illegitimate. Indeed, it is essential to science. It is only when the negative analogies are overlooked that the danger of serious confusion and misunderstanding arises.”

14) For a detailed defense of this model of justification, see Lee 2008.

15) Can we show that our senses are reliable sources of information about the world?

reliabilist insight compatible with this minimum condition by claiming that if someone is justified in holding a belief, despite the fact that he or she is unable to offer a suitable justification, it is so only under the condition that someone else in our epistemic community can justifiably judge that the belief in question has been produced by a reliable belief-forming process. If, however, second-order skepticism cannot be blocked, nobody can justifiably judge that the belief in question has been produced by a reliable belief-forming process, and so reliabilists cannot defend the claim that true beliefs can amount to genuine knowledge, despite the fact that nobody can provide suitable justifications for them.

5. Concluding Remarks

According to Briesen, reliabilists need circular reasoning to block second-order skepticism, but they nonetheless do not need it to block first-order skepticism; and being able to block only first-order skepticism is good enough for reliabilism. However, if my arguments in this paper are on the right track, reliabilists cannot take this kind of ‘divide and

To show this, it seems that we are required to establish that most of our perceptual judgments have been true. But we cannot determine these inductive instances without relying on sense perception. Thus, it seems, we cannot establish the general reliability of sense perception by means of an argument without falling into epistemic circularity. Along this line of thought, one may argue that the minimum condition for epistemic discourse is too strong a requirement, so that it leads to a certain form of skepticism. Notice that if nobody can justify the general reliability of sense perception without involving epistemic circularity, then the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse seems to imply that we should withhold endorsing all of our perceptual beliefs. This is a *non sequitur*, however. As I have argued elsewhere (Lee 2014), the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse does not undermine our epistemic discourse. I will not rehearse those arguments again here.

conquer' approach. This is mainly because they cannot meet the non-undermining provision for justification unless they can somehow block second-order skepticism. Consequently, insofar as circular reasoning is epistemologically bad, reliabilists cannot legitimately reject first-order skepticism unless they find a way to avoid second-order skepticism in a non-circular way. In addition, I have also argued that reliabilists cannot defend the alleged cases for the reliabilist insight insofar as they cannot block second-order skepticism. This is because, given second-order skepticism, these cases violate not only the non-undermining provision for justification, but also the minimum condition for our epistemic discourse.

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