

Is justification just in the head?

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0. Introduction

Our choices always have a consequence, one we know virtually nothing about. What we don't know can hurt us. We don't have to see something for it to make things turn out badly. It's different with wisdom. If we buy lottery tickets, we've both done something foolish even if you win. Winning makes you richer, not wiser. It's controversial whether normative notions are more similar to wisdom or badness in this respect, whether justification or rightness depends entirely upon factors sufficiently present to the mind.

Confession. I accept substantive views of our rights and duties according to which the difference between succeeding and failing to discharge our obligations needn't be traced to something internal to the agent (e.g., the agent's values or her information). What we didn't know could have made our actions wrong or unjustified. On a naive view of rights and duties, we have rights against others that they don't harm certain interests (e.g., that we're not punished for things we didn't do). In turn, others have correlative duties not to infringe these rights. Infringing might just be a matter of 'bad luck'. We can show all the care and concern that can be reasonably expected and still cross lines we shouldn't. Even if we're perfectly rational and eminently reasonable, our judgments about what to do are but fallible guides. My non-culpable ignorance might excuse, but it doesn't limit or subtract from the rights you have. It thus doesn't subvert my duties to act in ways consistent with respecting your non-overridden rights. Even if morality cares about what's in our heads and hearts, it also cares about whether we stay within certain boundaries. These boundaries are supposed to protect your interests, not to provide me with a luminous guide. Boundaries that protect your interests cannot be luminous guides, so the best guidance is a fallible guide to permissibility.

Debates about moral luck, when they're about the justification of action, parallel and have implications for debates about the justification of belief. In both settings, it seems a response is justified iff (ish) it's not the case that the individual shouldn't respond that way (Beddor, 2017; Littlejohn, 2012).¹ In both instances, it's a disagreement about the kinds of things that can make it the case that we shouldn't respond in some way. Our debate is a debate between internalists who accept the supervenience of justification upon the internal and the externalists who reject this supervenience thesis. It's not an embarrassing consequence of the naive view of rights and duties that it implies that internal duplicates can differ in terms of what there's justification for them to do.² It's a strength. Likewise, it's a strength of externalist theories of epistemic justification that they imply that internal duplicates can differ in terms of what there's justification for them to believe. My aim in this paper is to argue that externalists speak the truth when they say that internal duplicates can differ in terms of what there's justification for them to believe owing to external factors they might be non-culpably ignorant of.

¹ I say 'ish' because whilst some non-human agents (e.g., dogs, cats, fish) are agents in some more interesting sense than chemical agents are agents, it seems wrong to say that there are ways that these agents should or shouldn't respond. It doesn't seem to follow that their responses are automatically justified. Better, I think, to think of them as neither justified nor unjustified, neither right nor wrong.

² For our purposes, it won't matter whether we take the 'internal' to be that which supervenes upon an individual's non-factive mental states (Feldman & Conee (2001), Wedgwood (2002)), that which supervenes upon reflectively accessible conditions (Audi, 2001), or whether we need to broaden this to include the thinker's rational capacities (Sylvan, Forthcoming).

Our discussion is divided into three parts. In §1, I explain why the most powerful argument for internalism isn't decisive. In §2, I argue that we need to recognise the existence of a kind of externalist justification to understand how it's possible for us to have the rights and duties we know we have. In §3, I shall explain the importance of externalist norms.

1. Deception, doubt, and duty

Cohen's (1984) new evil demon objection is the natural place to start. Consider:

DEMON: In the good case, Agnes's experiences are perceptions, her apparent memories are genuine, and her reasoning is impeccable. Her beliefs nearly always constitute knowledge. Imagine some alternative possible world in which her internal duplicate, Agnes*, is systematically deceived by a demon. Are Agnes*'s beliefs justified?

Cohen thinks Agnes* is just as justified as Agnes in her beliefs.³ Some say Agnes* ought to believe what Agnes believes. Since Agnes*'s beliefs lack the properties externalists take to be necessary for justification, DEMON seems to be a counterexample to every externalist theory.⁴

To make this concrete, consider this knowledge-centred theory: thinkers should believe what they're in a position to know and shouldn't believe what they're not in a position to know (Littlejohn, 2013; Sutton, 2005; Williamson, 2007). Thus, we have justification to believe iff we're in a position to know. Being in a position to know p depends, *inter alia*, upon whether p is true, so this is an externalist view. Intuitions elicited by DEMON suggest that there aren't differences in what Agnes and Agnes* should believe or have justification to believe despite differences in what they can know. Justification appears to be very much 'in the head'.

This is the *direct* argument against externalism. We move straight from an intuitive reaction to a verdict without invoking much theory. Cohen bolsters his case against externalism by offering *indirect* arguments (i.e., arguments that invoke theoretical assumptions about what justification must be like). He suggests that Agnes* has precisely the same reasons for her beliefs as Agnes (1984: 281). On the assumption that the reasons we have determine justification (Conee & Feldman, 2004; Kiesewetter, 2017; Lord, 2018), externalism is refuted. This is the *same reasons* argument. He also remarks, "My argument hinges on viewing justification as a normative notion. Intuitively, if S's belief is appropriate to the available evidence, he is not to be held responsible for circumstances beyond his ken" (1984: 282). This suggests that normative properties like *being justified* depend on the internal conditions because they alone matter to responsibility. This is the *responsibility argument*. Fantl and McGrath add that it wouldn't 'make sense' for someone in the bad case to respond differently than they would in the good case (2009: 125). They seem to assume that if something makes it wrong to respond in some way, it must make sense to respond differently. This is the *sense-making argument*. Huemer suggests that externalist views inevitably clash with the principle that says that we cannot be required to respond differently in pairs of cases that are internally indiscernible (2006: 152). This is the *discernibility argument*. Sylvan (2020) thinks that internal duplicates will be alike in terms of whether they form beliefs in ways that

³ One caveat. Some authors distinguish questions about whether a *person* is justified from questions about whether a *response* is justified. Those who recognise such distinctions typically think *personal* justification is primarily a matter of responsibility or culpability. See, for example, (Bach, 1985; Engel, 1992; Lowy, 1978; Naylor, 1988). They then often distinguish that from the justification of the *response* which is a matter of permissibility or rightness. Excuses might split these apart. Moore (1997) argues that we need to draw these distinctions (and opt for an internalist conception of justified persons and an externalist conception of justified actions) to understand the differences between the right to defend ourselves from threats and the case of 'imperfect' self-defence where we use force against someone falsely believed to be a threat. Our focus is primarily on belief.

⁴ It isn't always clear whether epistemologists are interested primarily in determining when a *believer* is justified or a *belief* is. See Lowy (1978) and Naylor (1988) for helpful discussions of the distinction. Like Bach (1985) and Engel (1992), I think externalists are primarily interested in the justification of *belief*, that internalism is plausible as an approach to thinking about *believers*, and that the conflation of different kinds of evaluation is partially responsible for persistent disagreement about cases like DEMON.

manifests respect for the fundamental epistemic good and thinks justification cannot depend upon anything further. This is the *respect argument*.

We need to see if the externalist can accommodate or explain away Cohen's intuitions and address the indirect arguments. I'll do this in stages.

1.1 A promising response

Consider:

PROMISE: Agnes promised she'd return Inge's book. She might ask the charming Caradoc or the studious Sebastian to help. Given her evidence, it's more likely that Seb would successfully return the book. As it happens, she asks Caradoc to return the book. He does. (If it matters, Seb would have returned it, too.)

I've asked people whether Agnes did everything she should have. Reactions are mixed. Most say that there's something she should have done that she didn't (i.e., enlist Seb's help). Nearly as many, however, said she didn't fail to do something she should or that there's a sense in which she did and one in which she didn't.

Here's an argument that she didn't fail to do something she should have:

Her duty was to return a book. Since she did that, there's nothing that she should have done that she failed to do (*Fulfilment argument*).

Here's an opposing argument:

Her duty was to return a book. There was no reason to take the riskier option, but she did. She shouldn't have done that (*Riskiness argument*).

The fulfilment argument seems plausible given our naïve view of duties and rights (i.e., Inge has a right that her property is returned, so Agnes has that as a duty). When our duty is to change the world, no duty is left undone once the world is changed. We can't lack justification if we've done everything we should have. The riskiness argument seems plausible given that it's rational to prefer options more likely to yield desirable outcomes.

I feel the force of both arguments, so I wouldn't want to pick winners and losers. The third option is we don't choose sides. We adopt the *divider's* stance and distinguish different readings of 'ought' (Sepielli, 2018). Here's a divider's treatment of PROMISE. Objectively speaking, it's desirable to keep promises and undesirable not to. If some more incumbent duty requires us to break a promise, it's wrong to some degree to break that promise but we objectively ought to because, generally, what we objectively ought to do is minimise objective undesirability. Subjectively speaking, however, what we ought to do depends, in part, upon our information. We subjectively ought to minimise expected objective undesirability. In PROMISE, two options are tied in terms of objective desirability so it wasn't wrong for Agnes to choose one of them. (In this sense, the fulfilment argument is sound.) She chose the option that didn't minimise expected objective undesirability. Subjectively speaking, she should have chosen a different option. (In this sense, the riskiness argument is sound.)

Here's the moral I want to draw from this. There are intuitions that underwrite both arguments and, if veridical, they reveal an aspect or part of a complete normative picture, one that identifies Agnes's duties given the facts *and* evaluates her efforts in light of her information. Even if veridical, it's a mistake to take the intuitions that support the premises riskiness or fulfilment argument as a reason to think the other argument is unsound. We shouldn't loan books to people who deny there are duties to return them or to people who are indifferent to risk. The theories that explain the conclusions of these arguments might capture a truth, but we should prefer theories that capture the whole truth.

Dividers can approach DEMON similarly.⁵ Internalist *debaters* say Agnes* should believe what Agnes believes and add that this is the whole normative truth of the matter. On the divider's view, they're right about the first thing in the sense that Agnes* subjectively should believe what

⁵ We find a version of this response in Goldman (1988), but our proposals differ on most details.

Agnes believes.⁶ The internalist's observation isn't any reason to think that the externalists are wrong when they say that Agnes* objectively speaking shouldn't believe and thus lacks a kind of justification. (Nobody thought the externalists were offering a theory of subjective rightness or of rationality, right?) Externalist debaters speak the truth because they're telling us truths about objective epistemic rightness, but they overstep when they deny that there's anything the internalist might be right about. The intuition that Agnes* should believe might be veridical *and* explained by a theory that vindicates externalist intuitions, too.⁷

Some might worry that we trivialise the debate if we introduce this divider's stance. How can we have a debate if both sides are right? How can we have a debate without debaters? This worry is misplaced. Much of the interest in this debate derives from our interest in a question that Sylvan and I disagree about. We disagree about whether there's anything of normative significance that depends upon external matters. The debaters are open to this. The externalists insist upon this. Internalists reject this. Internalists think their arguments reveal something important about the nature of normativity, that there's some essential connection between the perspectives of rational individuals and the normative requirements that apply to them. I deny that such a connection exists. Many normative requirements apply to us in the first instance because of how we're related to other individuals. They enjoin us to refrain from crossing lines (even if we overlook them, misperceive them, are unsure about their location, etc.) and to try to right the wrongs we commit when we fail to do so. In effect, these normative relations tell us how we should coordinate our lives and can be seen imperfectly. I'm a divider, in part, because I don't think that we can correctly describe the normative domain by eliminating these normatively significant relations between persons and replace them with normative relations that essentially hold between a rational individual and her own thoughts. These relations can matter because the procedures we use to try to remain within these objective boundaries matter, too. Perhaps these norms of procedure, which tell us how we should or shouldn't reason, derive their authority from these norms of coordination, norms that tell us how we should or shouldn't relate to each other. One reason I think our debate can remain substantial and avoid collapsing into a purely verbal disagreement is that I think it's a substantial and not merely verbal matter whether there's anything of genuinely normative significance that can go beyond the information available at the time of decision. When we discover too late that the consequence of processing our information well is that we've crossed one of these lines, to me it seems that

⁶ Early theories of subjective rightness characterised subjective rightness in terms of beliefs about objective rightness. These views don't justice to the intuitions they're supposed to capture. Following Lazar (2020) and Olsen (2018), I shall assume that subjective rightness is (roughly) a matter of minimising expected objective wrongfulness.

⁷ Is this response a zillion miles off from Cohen's understanding of the situation? That's not clear. Whilst there are passages where it seems he's arguing against externalist theories like reliabilism, there are also passages where he considers a kind of divider's response. Having explained that he thinks that 'rationality' and 'justification' are essentially synonyms, he adds that distinguishing rationality from justification wouldn't soften the blows for the reliabilist who want to say that they're offering a theory of objective justification rather than rationality because, "the important epistemic concept, the one epistemologists have been concerned with ... is what the Reliabilist would call 'reasonability' or 'rationality' (1984: 284). If the internalists want to acknowledge that there's a normatively significant notion of justification that's externalist, they'll need to rebrand their objections as explanations as to why they want to focus on one notion more closely connected to subjective rightness and then it's not clear there's any debate here. But then they'd also have to agree that the indirect arguments don't reveal anything about normativity, *per se*. For what it's worth, I agree with Cohen that Agnes and Agnes*'s beliefs are equally rational. It's hard for me to understand a reading of 'rationality' talk according to which what's rational depends upon what's objectively suitable, but easy enough to understand a reading of 'justification' that correlates with objective suitability. Are debates about whether we have a justification or an excuse when faced by a merely apparent aggressor debates about whether rational people will use force when it's not necessary? I don't think so.

this isn't merely unfortunate or bad. To me, it seems that we've crossed a line we shouldn't have and there's much more pressure to set *these* things right than there is to improve the world by modifying its undesirable features if we had no hand in making the world undesirable in these ways.

On the naive view, we can be *certain* that we have a duty to keep a promise and *uncertain* about how to discharge it. Given uncertainty about which options would enable us to discharge our duties, it's not surprising that we'd say that there are effective ways of discharging the duty that Agnes subjectively shouldn't choose (even if it's objectively permissible to choose them) and ineffective strategies that she subjectively should choose (even if it's objectively wrong to choose that). Intuitions about PROMISE and DEMON don't show that our 'real' duties are things we can be certain we can discharge. Dividers remind us that one side speaking the truth doesn't amount to the other side speaking falsely. The whole truth contains truths implied by internalist and externalist theories. When we focus on the objective side, we're identifying lines we shouldn't cross or changes we must make. When we focus on the subjective side, we're focused on strategies for coping with uncertainty about how to succeed in these aims. While it might be helpful to think about the objective side as being concerned with goals we might have and the subjective side concerned with rational ways of pursuing them, we shouldn't be lured into thinking that these 'goals' aren't normative since these goals include things like discharging duties, respecting rights, and fulfilling obligations.⁸

⁸ Simion, Kelp, and Ghijsen (2016) suggest that it's better to think that there's a goal of acquiring true beliefs or knowledge than to think there's any norm that we violate if we believe without knowing. The divider's view accommodates part of their view, but I'd resist the urge to describe anything external or anything doubtful as a 'mere' goal. We might have the goal of refraining from convicting the innocent, but I think we have that goal, in part, because we don't want to violate the rights of the innocent. If such rights exist, correlative duties exist where the grounds of these duties would not supervene upon things internal to agents who need to make decisions about conviction.

2. The case for externalism

Something akin to the divider's view captures the intuitive acceptability of the 'ought' claims that internalist and externalist theories are designed to capture. Imagine we're watching Agnes navigate through a maze. It might be intuitively acceptable to say, 'She doesn't know it, but she ought to turn left because that leads to the exit'. It might also be acceptable to say, 'Given the information on her map, she ought to turn right'. I'm inclined to think these both could be correct (Wedgwood, 2016). Similar points hold for justification. Our responses are justified iff it's not the case that we shouldn't respond that way. Responses are justified in an objective sense iff they minimise objective wrongfulness and justified subjectively iff they minimise expected objective wrongfulness.⁹ We cannot say that some debater's theory, internalist or externalist, is vindicated or refuted by pointing to these intuitively acceptable claims if they're both correct.

What can we take from this? Little. It's a reminder that familiar intuitions have limited utility when it comes to testing theories of justification. We haven't yet shown that the externalist theories tell us anything true about justification. That's the task of the next section, to transition from defence to offense. I shall argue that we should reject *global* internalism (i.e., the view that internalism is true in every normative domain) and then argue that we need the resources of epistemic externalism to understand how we could have the rights and duties the naive view recognises.

⁹ I'm ignoring complications having to do with supererogation and satisficing that won't matter all that much here.

2.1 Against global internalism

Two more cases:

TRESPASS: Agnes is locked out of her house. She decides it's best to break a window to enter. In the bad case variant, Agnes* smashes a window to gain entry, too. It turns out that this isn't her house.

VIOLENCE: Agnes knows that Spike, a loan shark, has threatened to kill her if she doesn't repay a debt. Time's up. She hangs out in a nearby bar hoping that the presence of witnesses will deter Spike and his henchmen. It doesn't. She's cornered. As they approach, she pulls out her pistol and issues a warning. It has no effect. She takes aim and fires, hitting Spike. In the bad case variant, the men approaching Agnes* are actors in a play about gangsters. They reasonably believe she's another actor in their troupe with a prop gun, so they don't stop approaching. Things end badly for the lead.¹⁰

These are *information-asymmetry* cases, cases where individuals have different pertinent information (i.e., relative to their information, different options minimise expected objective undesirability).¹¹ Relative to their information, Agnes and Agnes* minimise expected objective undesirability by shooting and smashing, so internalists should say:

The cases don't differ in ways that matter for 'ought' or 'justification'.
Thus, Agnes* had no duty not to smash or shoot.

Here's my take:

The cases differ in normatively significant ways. Agnes* alone had a duty not to shoot or smash.

Wearing my divider's hat, I can say there's some sense in which my take is correct even if there are some acceptable readings of 'justified' or 'ought' on which the internalist take is correct. We need to distinguish the different readings. Moreover, I can say that in information-asymmetry cases, there are norms beyond those that the internalist recognises, norms that tell us what we should when interests come into conflict when everyone is trying to do what they subjectively ought to. The answer isn't automatically that it's there's a sense in which it's permissible for these parties to continue pursuing their interests and no sense in which some party is in the wrong. In some cases, one party will be in the wrong because they'll be doing something that objectively they shouldn't even if each party is doing what they subjectively ought to. The global internalist recognises no normatively significant relations that doesn't supervene upon each agent's information. Their view misses something of normative significance.

Here are some intuitions about VIOLENCE we want to capture. If onlookers intervene, it should be on Agnes's behalf and to stop Agnes*. If the people knew Agnes* intended to shoot them, they could try to shoot first, but this isn't so in Agnes's case. Here's an explanation that we can give if we reject global internalism. Agnes had a non-overridden right that the people she intended to shoot lacked. Agnes* intended to shoot people who had a non-overridden right that she lacked. This explanation only works if there's a normative difference between what Agnes and Agnes* do.¹² If the global internalist wants to try to explain this intuitive difference, they would need to explain it in non-normative terms. It's not clear how this explanation would go. They might say that Agnes*'s intended course of action might harm or kill, but this is true of Agnes's intended course of action, too. Presumably the reason we think it's worse for Agnes* to

¹⁰ A modified version of cases discussed by Robinson (1996).

¹¹ Undesirability is catch-all notion. Something can be undesirable because wrongful, evaluatively bad, unfitting, and so on.

¹² This fits with Fletcher's observation, "Whether a wrongful actor is excused does not affect the rights of other persons to resist or assist the wrongful actor. But claims of justification do" (2000: 760).

succeed than for Agnes to succeed is *precisely* that success in Agnes*'s case is success in violating the non-overridden rights of thespians.

Here are intuitions about TRESPASS that we want to capture. It's not just bad that the window is smashed. Someone has a duty to repair that. The duty is incumbent upon Agnes*, not Agnes. They could have both smashed similar looking windows at the same time. It could be that Agnes is better situated to help because she might have more money. Still, it is Agnes* that has the duty to repair. Why? One answer is that Agnes* infringes the rights of the owners and Agnes doesn't. This isn't available to the global internalist because they deny that Agnes* and Agnes differed in terms of discharging their duties. Having denied that there was any reason for Agnes* not to smash, it's hard to see why she'd have the reparative duty she seems to have in this case. It's not surprising, then, that (Zimmerman, 2008: 84) concludes that global internalists have to deny that Agnes* would have duties to repair that weren't shared by Agnes.

In summary, here's the argument against global internalism. Intuitions about information asymmetry cases show that we can have rights the existence of which doesn't supervene upon the internal conditions of other agents we encounter. Thus, they can have duties the ground of which don't supervene upon conditions internal to them. Thus, there is a kind of justification that their actions might lack for reasons that aren't 'in the head', duties to respect our rights and to rectify things when they've failed to discharge these duties initially.¹³

2.2 The Indirect Arguments

Let's revisit the indirect arguments, looking at generalised versions of them to see whether they'd compel us to accept global internalism:

- Agnes* has the same reasons as Agnes, so the shooting in the bad case was justified, not excused.
- Agnes*'s response was appropriate to the available evidence and she cannot be held responsible for shooting an innocent person. Since she was blameless for shooting, the shooting was justified, not excused.
- It wouldn't make sense for Agnes* not to shoot. Thus, the shooting was justified, not excused.
- The situation Agnes* was in was indistinguishable from a 'good case', so the shooting was justified, not excused.
- Agnes* and Agnes both do equally well in terms of manifesting respect for that which has final value, so the shooting was justified, not excused.

The operative test yields the wrong verdict when it comes to the justification of action. If you aren't a threat, you have the right not to be shot by people holding pistols and false beliefs. That tells us something about Agnes*'s duties. When she shoots, she might be excused, but she doesn't have the justification that we have when defending ourselves or others from genuine threats.

Even if we agree that normative status is determined by reasons (Raz, 2011), we take our rights to depend upon facts that don't supervene upon the internal conditions of every agent we might have the misfortune of encountering. Since duties correlate with rights and duties with reasons, the obvious slip in the same-reasons argument was that of taking the *available* reasons (e.g., things known to the agents we encounter) to be the totality of *potent* reasons (i.e., things that explain our rights and duties). The available reasons are only a fraction of the reasons that

¹³ It is not uncontroversial that agents in cases of imperfect self-defence lack justification and should merely be excused for wrongdoing. See Baron (2007) for an opposing view. My argument for externalism about the justification of actions and the beliefs that rationalised them was that the best approach to these issues draws the line between justification and excuse in such a way that we'd only have justification in cases of (genuine) self-defence. See Littlejohn (2012) for an attempt to draw on the legal rationale for drawing the justification-excuse distinction this way to help explain how it should be drawn in the epistemological case. This work was inspired by work by Gardner (2007), Moore (1997), and Robinson (1996) who defend the view that the objective character of the act matters to its justification. Greco (2021) comes to similar conclusions.

bear on permissibility. We can use available reasons to try to discern what we should do, but they don't wholly determine whether our best judgment is correct.

The responsibility argument fails because excuses aren't justifications. Excuses remove responsibility without conferring justification, so we cannot move from the correct assumption that internal conditions matter to responsibility to the unwarranted conclusion that they exclusively determine what there's justification to do. Imperfect self-defence cases are textbook examples of excused wrongdoing. Agnes* isn't to be held responsible for shooting without justification and her victim's rights don't supervene upon the conditions that matter for culpability.

The difference between embarking upon some course of action that violates another person's rights and embarking upon one that doesn't might not be discernible to the agent, but since rights matter to duties and duties to justification, a case being indiscernible from a case of permissible action isn't a good test for justification. Whilst it wouldn't make sense for Agnes* to put her pistol down, that's what she should do.

Sylvan (Forthcoming) is right that internal duplicates do equally well in terms of manifesting respect. We disagree about whether this is a test for justification. I assume we disagree about the naive picture of rights and duties. To determine whether his test works, we have to know whether our overall picture of our rights and duties is revised to eliminate the kinds of rights we've been discussing.

2.3 From externalism to externalism

We should reject global internalism because it denies that we have rights and duties we know we have. What should we think about epistemic internalism? It's not a theory about such rights and duties, so does it remain a live option? No.¹⁴

Actions and intentions embody answers to questions, questions about whether to do something (Hieronymi, 2008). There's a notion of justification according to which the justification of these responses depends, in part, upon whether these are *objectively* good answers (i.e., answers that lead us to do what's permitted given our naively understood duties). Our beliefs embody our answers to questions, questions about whether something is so. My position is that there is a notion of justification for belief similar to our notion of justification for action. The justification of belief depends, in part, upon whether our answers are *objectively* good (e.g., we justifiably settle questions when we know the answer). Our epistemic internalists deny that being an objectively good answer matters for the justification of belief, but not action. The denial of parallel treatment strikes me inherently implausible and unmotivated.¹⁵ That's not my main concern, but it needed to be said.

The justification of belief is a justification for being in a state that plays the belief-role. Whatever justifies believing p must justify being in a state that rationalises the responses rationalised by having settled the question whether p affirmatively. If our beliefs are fit to play

¹⁴ Let me note one point of agreement with Sylvan. My view is that epistemological theories have no business telling us what to do. We shouldn't argue from internalism about epistemic justification to global internalism, for example, because while our epistemic norms should accommodate the idea that we should be guided by our beliefs, it shouldn't tell us where we should or shouldn't be guided to by these beliefs. These norms should be *neutral* on questions about whether there are externalist practical norms of the kinds I've argued refute global internalism. My impression is that Sylvan agrees to some extent. We agree that the best thing for the internalist to say in response to my argument is *not* that beliefs fail to rationalise actions or that epistemology teaches us that there cannot be externalist practical norms. Since we don't disagree about whether beliefs should rationalise non-doxastic responses, our disagreement in the end largely concerns a disagreement about the kinds of practical norms there might be. Settling this disagreement would require settling a disagreement about internalism in the practical domain, a disagreement about whether there are norms that enjoin us to respect rights and fulfil duties on the naive conception.

¹⁵ On this point, I'm in complete agreement with Gibbons (2013).

this rationalising role, they're justified. Conversely, if nothing is fit for playing this role, there cannot be justification to have the beliefs that fill this role.

Agnes knew she was legally permitted to shoot the approaching men if the men were a threat. If she were to believe that these men were a threat, given this knowledge, she would be in a state that rationalised believing that she had a legal right to shoot. If she settled the question whether these men were a threat affirmatively, given the setup, she either (a) *shouldn't* settle the question whether she had a legal right to shoot affirmatively or (b) *may* believe she has this right. If (a) holds, she lacked justification to believe these men are a threat. If (b) holds, she had it. It's relatively uncontroversial that this kind of normative coordination (i.e., coordination of requirements) holds between beliefs.

Beliefs rationalise affective responses. Having settled the question, Agnes is in a state that rationalises being angry with the men. Having judged that they're a threat, she either (a) *shouldn't* be angry with these men or (b) *may* be angry with these men. If she *shouldn't* be angry with these men, it's either because her belief isn't about something that warrants being angry or her *belief* is at fault. The object warrants anger, so the justification of her belief and her anger is coordinated. Agnes has every right to be angry if she has the right to believe they intend her harm.

Epistemic internalists needn't disagree with this much, but what about action? Beliefs rationalise actions, too. Having settled the question whether these men are a threat, she either (a) *shouldn't* take means to defend herself or (b) *may* take such means. Normative coordination holds here, too. If Agnes *shouldn't* pull the trigger, she shouldn't be in the states that rationalise pulling the trigger. Since she knows that she should pull the trigger if these men intend her harm, there's similar coordination between the justification of the belief that these men intend her harm and the decision to pull the trigger.

Our epistemic internalists deny that what justifies belief, *inter alia*, justifies doing what we know we should or may do if our beliefs are correct. Try not to get distracted by the fact that the epistemic internalist's position seems to be bizarrely externalist (e.g., they think that Agnes* *should* keep believing she should pull the trigger as these threatening men approach even though they insist that Agnes* shouldn't pull the trigger) and focus on this argument from externalism about the justification of the *rationalised* to externalism about the justification of the *rationalisers*:

P1. What justifies believing *p* justifies being in a state that rationalises the responses rationalised by affirmatively settling the question whether *p*.

P2. The responses rationalised by affirmatively settling the question whether *p* include actions.

P3. The justification of these actions can depend, in part, upon external conditions.

C1. Thus, the justification of having affirmatively settled the question whether *p* can depend, in part, upon external conditions.

C2. Thus, the justification of believing *p* can depend, in part upon external conditions.

Accept (P1) because the rationalising relations hold because of normative coordination. When we know which responses would be correct if our beliefs are correct, what justifies belief (i.e., the rationaliser) justifies subsequent responses (i.e., the rationalised). Accept (P2) because beliefs rationalise action. Accept (P3) because we're assuming it in this section. Once we reject global internalism and recognise the possibility of normative coordination, we have to accept epistemic externalism to understand how aspects of the naive view of our rights and duties could be correct.

We can think of this argument as a kind of 'morally loaded cases' argument for epistemic externalism.¹⁶ Let me note an important difference between the argument offered here and this one:

¹⁶ This was the main argument for externalism about the justification of belief in Littlejohn (2012).

- P1. According to epistemic internalism, we can justifiably believe all manner of abhorrent moral outlooks and know how we should act on the assumption that they are correct.
- P2. Given normative coordination, however, that would mean that we could justifiably *do* the abhorrent things.
- P3. We cannot justifiably do the abhorrent things.
- C. So, epistemic internalism is false.¹⁷

One potential problem with this argument concerns (P1). Internalists can (and have) claimed that we cannot have justification to believe false normative theories. Some have suggested that that's because we all happen to have justification for believing the true normative theories (Smithies, forthcoming; Titelbaum, 2015). I don't know why we'd think that, but it's important to remember that the truth of the true normative theories supervenes upon the internal conditions since such theories are necessarily true. That means that the truth of these theories, in some sense, counts as 'internal'. This makes it difficult to defend (P1). Internalists cannot deploy this kind of response to my main argument for externalism. Facts about who has rights to what don't supervene upon internal conditions and such facts help constrain what's permissible for us to do. Thus, while some internalists have accepted that some of our justified normative beliefs are infallible, that's only a consistent position for them to take if they either deny us the rights we know we have or limit the set of such beliefs in such a way that they don't secure normative coordination.¹⁸

Beliefs are supposed to give us 'intelligence' we can use. My suggestion, similar to Sylvan's (2020), is that beliefs are justified when they can do what beliefs are 'supposed' to do (i.e., when they are good for the purposes of playing the belief role). We disagree about what this entails. Here's an analogy that explains why I end up on the other side of this debate. You want to know which wild mushrooms are safe. You buy my guide. You eat mushrooms my guide says are safe, but they're poisonous. If I haven't taken due care in writing my guide, you can blame me, say I've done something wrong, and so on. I'd have a reparative duty to try to put things right (e.g., to help cover your medical costs). But what if I took due care? You can't blame me, but did I do anything wrong by selling this guide? Was the information in this guide good?

Here are some options:

- (a) The intelligence given by my guide wasn't good, but my duty was to do due diligence;
- (b) My duty was to provide readers with good intelligence and my guide didn't do that;
- (c) I did my duty, which was to provide readers with good intelligence.

Thinking about the norms governing product liability and responsibilities of producers is a helpful to think about the ethics of belief. My view is (b), Sylvan's seems to be closest to (c), but (a) is also an option for internalists. I accept (b) because it explains why I have a subsequent duty to poisoned readers to make reparations when they are misled. This duty is a response to something I did in the past that was wrong to some degree. Consumers have a right that the products they consume are safe and effective. Producers have the correlative duty. We have liability without fault.

The case for recognising a strict liability standard when it comes to obligations of producers is, in my view, just as plausible as the case for a strict liability standard when it comes to the ethics of belief. My impression is that *if* someone thinks that false beliefs can be 'good' in

¹⁷ A version of this argument is offered against specific forms of internalist views in Littlejohn (2014). Srinivasan (2020) and Williamson (2019) offer similar arguments and seem to want to draw more general lessons about internalism across the board. King (Forthcoming) and Pettigrew (2022) respond by arguing that we can have justification to believe repugnant theories, but it's not clear whether, in accepting (P1) they end up denying (P3).

¹⁸ Something equivalent to or close to the view that our justified beliefs about what we ought to do cannot be false is defended by a number of authors with internalist sympathies (e.g., Gibbons, 2013; Kiesewetter, 2016; Way & Whiting, 2016).

some way, they might be right, but they might also need to concede that there's an objective sense in which they're not 'good' (e.g., if offered two piles of lottery tickets, one larger and one smaller, there's one sense in which getting the larger pile is 'better' (i.e., it's more likely to contain the winner) but another sense in which getting the smaller pile is 'better' (e.g., if it contains the winner)).¹⁹ This is why I'm sceptical of (c). As for (a), if the internalist opts for this, they at least recognise the existence of a kind of objective badness that can attach to falsehoods contained in guides, but they deny that such objective defects matter to justification. It's hard, having denied, that objective defects matter to justification to then argue that producers can have special reparative duties to consumers, so (a) seems a hard view to defend.

Let me briefly summarise my main argument for externalism. We're supposed to be guided by our beliefs. That's a truism. If we unpack that, it comes to the view that the beliefs we're supposed to hold (i.e., ones that are justified) are fit to guide us in forming further beliefs and responding affectively and practically. The right to believe comes with right to respond as if what's believed is correct. There are, however, lines we shouldn't cross. These include lines grounded in facts that don't supervene upon our information. The rights of others don't exist because of conditions internal to us, but because of how things are with them. Such rights are correlated with duties that are incumbent upon us that constrain the options we might justifiably choose. In combination, this means that conditions that aren't internal to us that constrain the options we might justifiably choose limits the beliefs we might justifiably use to guide us. We know that externalism about the justification of belief is true because we know externalism is true about the justification of the things done in light of our beliefs.

3. Why justification isn't just in the head

Of the various arguments we can for epistemic externalism, the one that's the most compelling is that we need externalism to understand how we could have the rights and duties we know to exist. Once we recognise duties to respect certain boundaries between us, we have to conclude that the justification of action and the beliefs that rationalise them depends upon facts about how we're related to each other. The grounds of these duties cannot be fit neatly into our heads, so the justification of our actions and the attitudes that rationalise them cannot be just in the head.

Scepticism about this line is understandable because of a general scepticism about notions like objective rightness. I've tried to soften this scepticism by suggesting that some of it can be mitigated by adopting the divider's stance. Intuitions thought to show that permissibility has nothing to do with objective right-making features are, properly understood, about different aspects of normativity. Ultimately, we need to recognise these objective right- and wrong-making features to understand a larger set of intuitions. Internalists, when they speak the truth, tell us important truths about subjective aspects of normativity, but we only get the whole truth if we recognise that externalists are right about an important notion of justification.

Scepticism remains. Some deny that the notion of objective is important or interesting. Gibbard explains why he thinks this notion is 'fishy':

It would be nice ... to know what objectively you ought to do. If indeed you could check with an omniscient advisor, that's what you would ask ... Such advisors, though, are in short supply. Your real questions, then, are what to do on the basis of information you have (2005: 343).

The importance of the objective notions emerges when we think about aspects of information asymmetry cases that internalist debaters overlook or deny have normative significance.

One kind of normative coordination that's desirable is the coordination between belief and the full range of responses rationalised by belief. There's another kind of normative coordination that's desirable. Imagine something that approximates the internalist's normative utopia. Each individual discharges their duties as global internalists understand them. We can agree that this society might be a bad place to be. There will be shootings, smashings, and wars,

¹⁹ See Dutant (2013).

for example. When we have conflicts of interests that involve the use of force or violence, we might have a concern, voiced by Ewing (1947: 122), that there's something undesirable about a normative framework in which morality pits people against each other by, say, telling us we have duties to take up arms to oppose those who are duty bound to take up arms to oppose us.²⁰ He takes it a too far when he suggests there might be a kind of contradiction lurking here, but this instinct that there's something undesirable about this picture is a good one.

A more desirable system of norms *wouldn't* pit us against each other in the regular way the global internalist theory predicts. That's not because pacifism is true, but because there should be an additional set of norms that answers questions about how we should handle conflicts in information asymmetry cases by thinking about who is in the right and who is in the wrong. The global internalist denies that there could be any such norms. I find this thought disturbing. The internalist view can give us norms of good procedure, but they deny the existence of further norms of coordination that tell us who, in the information asymmetry cases, would be in the wrong. They thus reject the picture that would give us the kind of desirable normative harmony according to which duty doesn't bind us to battle each other.

If you are disturbed by the picture of duty according to which duty binds us to oppose each other, you'll need to reach for norms that make reference to features of the situation that go beyond those that supervene upon the information we possess. This requires a revision to your overall normative theory, one that recognises objective grounds of duty and epistemic norms that, *inter alia*, do not compel us to believe we should do the things we're required not to do. No internalist theory can hope to offer this, so I see no hope in trying to tell the complete normative story in internalist terms.²¹

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²⁰ For a helpful discussion of Ewing's thoughts on these matters, see Piller (2007) where I first found Ewing's remarks.

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