

Internalism empowered:
How to bolster a theory of justification with a direct realist theory of awareness

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ABSTRACT: The debate in the philosophy of perception between direct realists and representationalists should influence the debate in epistemology between internalists and externalists about justification. If direct realists are correct, there are more consciously accessible justifiers for internalists to exploit than externalists think. Internalists can retain their distinctive internalist identity while accepting this widened conception of internalistic justification: even if they welcome the possibility of cognitive access to external facts, their position is still quite distinct from the typical externalist position. To demonstrate this, Alvin Goldman's critique of internalism is shown to ignore important lessons from the case for direct realism about perception, in particular by unjustifiably assuming that internalism entails that only facts simultaneous with the justification of a belief can justify the belief. Goldman's definition of a "justifier" is also inconsistent with the overall guidance conception of epistemology he takes for granted in his critique of internalism.

1. Introduction

Ethicists know that if they want to understand the nature of moral justification, they need to understand something about moral *justifiers*. A teleological theory's view of which actions count as morally justified depends on its account of the nature of the *ends* by reference to which actions are justified. Is the end of action a quantity to be maximized, e.g. the amount of happiness in the world? Or is it an intrinsically valuable activity, one that constitutes the exercise of a virtue? Likewise, a deontological theory's view of moral justification depends on its account of the nature of a rational being, the maxims or will of whom determines the content of our duties.

In epistemology, by contrast, central debates about the nature of epistemic justification are not yet seen to turn on debates about the nature of epistemic justifiers. One of the central controversies about justification is the dispute between internalists and externalists. Many internalists say that justification crucially requires awareness of the justifiers, while externalists deny this.¹ Most epistemologists, whether internalist or externalist, think about awareness on the model left to them by early modern representationalists, the view that the objects of awareness are inner mental objects rather than objects in the world. Yet this assumption has not kept pace with debate in the philosophy of perception about the nature of the objects of perception or about the nature of perceivers. Direct realism is now a live option rivaling indirect realist views of perception such as representationalism.²

¹ Given that internalism have been characterized as both "mentalism" and as "accessibilism" (a distinction to be explained in the next section), it is possible that those who emphasize the idea that mental states are justifiers need not also insist that we have access to these mental states, provided that they deny the transparency of the mental.

² The first prominent articulation of direct realism, historically, was by Thomas Reid (1769/1785) in response to the representationalism and sensationalism of Locke and Hume. The 20th century counterparts to Locke and Hume were the positivist sense data theorists, and it is no surprise that their critics were some of the first 20th century direct realists, including especially Sellars (1997/1956). For more on Sellars' direct realism, see Levine (2007). McDowell (1996) follows in Sellars' tradition, but also denies that perception is a direct, basic form of justification. Like

In this paper I will argue that if direct realists about perception are right, and the direct objects of perceptual awareness are not internal mental states, but ordinary mind-independent objects, then our general understanding of the awareness of (or “access” to) justifiers will have to change. Paradoxically, the direct realist view which counts *external* things as the objects of perception will favor what is called an *internalist* view of justification. The paradox is an accident of philosophers’ somewhat idiosyncratic naming scheme for the two major theories of justification.

At least one philosopher has already noticed this connection in passing. Though he does not favor direct realism, Laurence Bonjour makes the following observation:

[A]lthough the general Cartesian point of view that we have largely followed in this book holds that what is available in a person’s first-person cognitive perspective is initially limited to (i) facts about the contents of his or her conscious mental states, together with (ii) facts or truths that are self-evident on an *a priori* basis, this rather severe limitation is not mandated by internalism as such. Thus to take the most important alternative possibility, *if* it were possible to defend a version of direct realism according to which the perceptual beliefs about material objects are directly justified without the need for any inference from the content of sensory experience, then the facts about the physical world apprehended in this way would also be directly accessible from the first-person cognitive perspective and would thereby constitute part of the basis for internalist justifications. (2002, 223)

Bonjour himself (2004) is critical of direct realism, but elsewhere I have offered a defense against his specific objections in the hope of defending a version of direct realist foundationalism that treats the awareness of mind-independent facts as a source of basic justification (Bayer 2011). Here I hope to enrich my case, by showing how this direct realist approach to justification also falls squarely within the internalist tradition.

Though my arguments concern widely shared assumptions in the internalism/externalism dispute, I will analyze the position of the externalist Alvin Goldman as a representative of conventional wisdom on the matter. Though he has written a fair amount on the topic since 1999 (some of which I will consider), the mistake I want to highlight is brought to the foreground in his classic paper of that year, “Internalism Exposed.” I will argue that because he fails to consider accounts of the nature of awareness other than the indirect realist’s, he erroneously supposes that internalism allows conscious access to only those justifiers that exist simultaneously with the beliefs they justify, and that a “justifier” should be defined as *any* factor relevant to the justificatory status of a belief.

Reid, Alston (1999) defends a form of direct realism that he takes to be relevant to justification, but from a reliabilist/externalist perspective. Other recent defenses of versions of direct realism seen as relevant to a view of epistemic justification include Schantz (2000) and LeMorvan (2004). In the philosophy of perception, there are defenders of direct realism like Noë (2002), Johnston (2004), and Brewer (2006), for whom questions of justification are not a primary concern. Direct realists closest to the position invoked in this paper, which combines the view of perception with a distinctively foundationalist approach to justification include Kelley (1986), Huemer (2001) and Porter (2006). I have defended a version of foundationalism based on direct realism in Bayer (2011).

2. Accessibilist vs. mentalist interpretations of internalism, and direct realist foundationalism

In “Internalism Exposed,” Goldman’s preliminary definition of “internalism” is stated in terms of a view about the nature of the justifiers of belief. (Later in section 6, I’ll discuss his definition of “justifier.”) According to Goldman, essential to the internalist position is the idea that the only facts that justify are ones that are knowable by introspection, and because the only facts knowable by introspection are conscious states, he defines “strong internalism” in the following way:

Strong (mentalist) internalism: Only facts concerning what conscious states an agent is in at time t are justifiers of the agent’s belief at t .

Here it is clear that Goldman is assuming the very Cartesian framework that Bonjour notes is not essential to internalism. But why does Goldman assume that internalism must be defined in terms of introspectively accessible justifiers? Conee and Feldman, and later Goldman himself (2009), acknowledge that there are really two distinct ways of defining the internalist thesis: it can be defined either as *accessibilism* (the view that “the epistemic justification of a person’s belief is determined by things to which the person has some special sort of access”) or as *mentalism* (the view that “a person’s beliefs are justified only by things that are internal to the person’s mental life”) (2001, 2). Goldman’s “strong internalism” is clearly mentalism. Conee and Feldman note that philosophers do not separate these views as long as they assume that our only special sort of access or awareness is introspective (2001, 2). But what if we have a special sort of access apart from introspection?³ Then the objects of this access might not be mental states. This is precisely what many direct realists about perceptual awareness think.

Direct realism is the view that perceptual awareness is the direct awareness of mind-independent objects, and it is “direct” in the sense that this awareness does not operate in virtue of any kind of inference from the awareness of intermediate mental objects. Not every direct realist about perception thinks that perceptual awareness affords cognitive access that is relevant to justification, but some do—in particular, the direct realist foundationalists, who consider states of perceptual awareness to be central to the justification of basic beliefs.⁴

Direct realists do not regard introspective access as the only form of access relevant to justification, and so just as

³ I take it that Goldman calls introspection a “*special* sort of access” for the internalist because subjects have privileged access to their own mental states. For this reason he might dispute the direct realist’s attempt to label perception as a *special* sort of access. It’s true that the objects of perception would not be accessible to only a single individual. But perceptual access would be special in another respect: if it is a basic form of awareness not requiring further justification of its own, it would be special in its role as providing *foundational* justification. In this way, perception would actually be special in the respect most relevant to questions about justification. (Nothing much turns in epistemology on the question of whether or not there is privileged access, and when it does, privileged access is a liability.) In any case, the specialness of our justifiers is not really important to the issues discussed in this paper, so I will subsequently refrain from referring to them this way.

⁴ See again Kelley (1986), Huemer (2001), Porter (2006), and Bayer (2011).

the objects of reflection (mental states) count as justifiers for mentalists, the objects of perception (mind-independent objects) would count as justifiers for direct realists who apply their theory of awareness to a theory of basic justification.

We cannot evaluate the arguments for and against direct realism in the space of this paper, though we will briefly survey some of its argumentative apparatus in section 5. Instead, we will focus on showing the *implications* of accepting a direct realist view of perception for the internalism/externalism debate. The first important implication is: if direct realism is true, accessibilism and mentalism are not coextensive. An accessibilist does not have to be a mentalist, because we can have cognitive access to external, mind-independent facts.

One might wonder how a form of access that is not access to internal mental states could still be called “internalistic.” Perhaps we should drop the term “internalism” entirely, and replace it with “accessibilism.” Even so, it would still differ importantly from externalist theories (a point that will become clearer in section 4 below). But there is an important sense in which it is still appropriate to call a direct realist theory of justification “internalist”: even though, on this view, some justifiers are external facts, we can still say that external justifiers are *internal* to our epistemic perspective in the sense that we are aware of them. They are “within our ken.”⁵

⁵ One might contend that mentalism is more essential to internalism than accessibilism, because mentalism better preserves intuitions about how two mentally equivalent subjects, one in the normal world, the other in a world subject to an evil demon’s deception, might still have equally justified beliefs. As Pritchard (2011) notes, however, the mentalist thesis is not adequate to preserve intuitions about the invariance of justification between these cases: if we adopt a kind of semantic externalism according to which mental contents include external states, then any invariance between levels of justification would not be explained by an invariance in mental states, since the mental states of the normal subject and deceived subject would be different (since the subject in the normal world stands in a different causal relationship to his environment than the subject in a demon world). Besides, there is a serious question about whether or not an internalist needs to take for granted that justification is invariant between these two subjects. As Pritchard argues, accessibilism is consistent with disjunctivism, the view that there is no highest common factor between veridical perception and hallucination: we might say that the normal subject has perceptual access to real objects, and the deceived subject does not, but that even though neither could discriminate the normal case from the skeptical scenario, discriminability is not a prerequisite for justification. And indeed, many direct realists about perception are disjunctivists.

What then would account for the intuition that justification is invariant between these two cases? Pritchard contends, and I think his response is plausible, that there is something common to both cases: both could involve cases of *blameless* belief, and mentalist internalists are confusing blamelessness with justification. (Note that this is a distinction usually mustered in defense of reliabilism, but an accessibilist internalist can embrace it wholeheartedly.) I think this account of the demon world subject’s belief could be deepened to the extent that demon deception can be assimilated to the “deception” involved in dreams. A dreaming subject is not really in the position to *judge* at all, and should not even be held as epistemically responsible. “Beliefs” formed by an epistemically non-responsible subject are neither blameworthy *nor* praiseworthy. (See Sosa 2007, chapter 1, for more on this evaluation of the epistemology of dreaming.)

But if instead we find it compelling to regard the subject in the demon world as still epistemically responsible about judgments he forms about his sensory inputs, even though the causes of these inputs are simply radically different from the causes of the same sensory inputs in a normal world, we may have to concede that such a subject can still be justified or unjustified. In this case, however, direct realism may have a way of explaining the invariance of justification between the normal and demon worlds. On direct realism, the fact that the causes of sensory inputs are radically different from the normal ones might mean that perception in the demon world does not fail to be veridical. The subject in the demon world may in fact be perceiving something independently real—whatever the demon is using to instill the inputs in the subject’s mind—and the subject’s concepts may simply and accurately refer to whatever tools the demon uses. The fact that a subject’s sensory inputs appear in a way that is consistent with a radically different cause in a different world would not be a barrier to their being able to form true beliefs, because we should not confuse the *form* with the *object* of perception—an idea to be elaborated upon later in section 5. This interpretation might be consistent with Putnam’s (1992) semantic argument against skepticism, which invokes a kind of semantic externalism to claim that a “brain in a vat’s” beliefs would have to be in terms of concepts whose reference is fixed by external facts in the vat world. And interestingly, Putnam (1994) later endorses a form of direct realism about perception. For more on the possibility that veridical perception can assume radically different forms, see my “Keeping Up Appearances” (forthcoming).

3. The problem of stored beliefs and simultaneity access internalism

Noting that direct perception might be a source of internalistic justification does not do much on its own to settle the broader internalism/externalism controversy. The debate between internalists and externalists does not typically concern perceptual awareness. Granted, externalists like Goldman do uncritically assume that perception, insofar as it delivers information about the external world, could only count as a resource for the externalist (Goldman 1999, 279). And so direct realism calls this assumption into question and expands the justificational resources available to the internalist. But I will argue further that if we accept that direct realism offers us an internalistic theory of perceptual justification, other sources of justification can be understood along internalistic lines as well, empowering internalism further still. In particular, there are important implications for the internalist account of memory.

Although Goldman discusses many forms of justification which he believes pose problems for internalism, I will focus here on the first problem he raises in “Internalism Exposed”: the *problem of stored beliefs*. Here is Goldman’s statement of it:

At any given time, the vast majority of one’s beliefs are stored in memory rather than occurrent or active. Beliefs about personal data (for example, one’s social security number) about world history, about geography, or about the institutional affiliations of one’s professional colleagues are almost all stored rather than occurrent *at a given moment*. Furthermore, for almost any of these beliefs, one’s conscious state includes nothing that justifies it. No perceptual experience, no conscious memory event, and no premises consciously entertained *at the selected moment* will be justificational sufficient for such a belief. According to strong internalism, then, none of these beliefs is justified *at that moment* (1999, 278, emphasis added).

There are actually two separate problems here. First, our stored beliefs, which we need to justify still other beliefs, are not immediately available to consciousness, but must be retrieved. Second, even when retrieved, these stored beliefs are not justified by anything “at the selected moment”—presumably, because they are about such things as world history, geography, etc., facts that are distant in time and space. The problem here is not necessarily related to the assumption that internalism must be mentalistic. If one thought that external facts could be *immediately* perceived, they might still count as viable justifiers that do not run up against the problem Goldman is presently noting. Suppose then that we amend Goldman’s statement of internalism to reflect the view he thinks actually faces the problem of stored beliefs:

Access internalism: Only facts accessed by the agent at time *t* are justifiers of the agent’s belief at *t*.

So even if we accept perception as a source of justification, internalism would have difficulty explaining how we could justify our stored beliefs, since we cannot perceive things *at time t* relevant to justifying beliefs *at time t* about, for instance, historical events that happened at *time t minus x*. Beliefs justified by our stored beliefs cannot be justified “at a given moment,” because we cannot access our stored beliefs instantaneously. And stored beliefs that are about facts distant in time or space cannot themselves be justified “at the selected moment,” because we do not or cannot access these non-simultaneous, non-present facts.

Let’s briefly consider the first problem that Goldman raises: the fact that not all of our beliefs are occurrent and most are stored. At first glance, it is not obvious why internalism should require all justifiers to be immediately present to mind: even Goldman’s original statement of the “strong internalist” thesis speaks of what the agent “*can* readily know” (my emphasis) rather than what the agent *does* know at the moment. It is widely accepted that the most plausible version of internalism is the view that only *accessibility*, not actual *access* is required for justification (Pappas 2005, part 3), and it is odd that Goldman seems to miss this.

But perhaps Goldman thinks he is interpreting internalism charitably when he supposes that internalist justification requires actual access, not just accessibility. He may think that a criterion of justification in terms of the mere disposition to access is far too broad and would commit the internalist to regarding too many beliefs as justified. His answer to Feldman (1988) suggests as much: Feldman claims that there are two kinds of justification, occurrent and dispositional, just as there are parallel kinds of belief, and that stored beliefs to which we have dispositional access involve a kind of stored, dispositional justification.⁶ Goldman responds that a disposition to access or acquire knowledge is not enough for serious justification (1999, pp. 278-9). A sleeping train passenger could have the disposition to see details of passing scenery outside: if he were to open his eyes, he would see the scenery. But until he *actually* opens his eyes, presumably he has no justification for any beliefs about the scenery.⁷

Conee and Feldman (2001) respond that Goldman is missing the internalist’s point: it is not the disposition to be in *any* conscious state that counts towards dispositional justification, but the disposition to access an already stored belief, i.e., to access some already acquired source of justification. There is a significant difference between a yet-to-be exercised capacity and a presently unactivated product of a previously exercised capacity. If we think of

⁶ Notice that this is basically Aristotle’s response to the same problem, as outlined in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII.3, in which he outlines a potential and actual sense of *knowledge*.

⁷ Goldman has a second response: that “having a disposition . . . is not the sort of fact or condition that can be known by introspection” (1999, p. 279). But this response misses the point of Feldman’s idea. The internalist doesn’t need to think that we must have access to the disposition to be justified, only that we need to have the disposition to access the justifier. Most likely, Goldman is assuming here that *any factor* that is in any way relevant to one’s justificatory status counts as a justifier. I critique this assumption from the internalist’s standpoint later in section 5.

justification as a form of transmitted epistemic status, then it should be clear why a wholly unexercised epistemic capacity has no product to transmit, but a previously exercised capacity might. Since Goldman himself does not address Conee and Feldman's (2001) response in his later critique (2009) of their overall internalist position, we can take the point as going to Conee and Feldman, at least for the moment.

But perhaps Goldman's point is that "dispositional justification" does not fit into the overall internalist view of justification for other reasons. I think this broader concern is revealed by Goldman's second problem, concerning our distance in space and time from the facts that justify our beliefs. Interestingly, Goldman does not mention that this problem applies not only to stored but to occurrent beliefs, as well. Even for an occurrent belief *about the past* or an occurrent inductive generalization justified by observations from the past there is not necessarily anything that one has access to at the immediate moment that justifies it. Making the distinction between access and accessibility does the internalist no good here, because if the justifiers of our stored beliefs about the past are facts in the past, they seem to be simply *inaccessible*—they cannot be brought back to consciousness simply by a search process. We never perceive again the events we once perceived that we now only remember, and we never perceived in the first place events in the past that we know of only through the testimony of others.

We should be careful not to confuse Goldman's point here with one he makes later in his statement of the so-called "problem of forgotten evidence." That problem related to beliefs which seem justified even though they depend on an original source whose particular identity we might not remember. There is some relationship between these two problems, and in his later work, Goldman himself seems to run these two problems together (2009, 15). But in the same later work, Goldman makes it even clearer that he regards internalists as holding that memory generates justification through the occurrence of conscious recall events in the immediate moment. Goldman distinguishes this from a "historical" view of memory, according to which memory merely preserves justification non-consciously, such that "events or states of affairs occurring or obtaining prior to the time of justifiedness . . . can be genuine J-factors [justifiers]" (2009, 16). Goldman even says that the internalist is committed to what he calls the "continual clearing of the justificational slate." Even if one perceives an object through direct perception and forms a belief specifically about this object, Goldman thinks that the internalist must concede that "[a] person may mnemonically retain a belief from one moment to the next, but that retention makes no contribution to the justifiedness or unjustifiedness of the succeeding moment's belief" (17).

So, Goldman's worry about the internalistic justifiability of beliefs about the past could arise only if the internalist thesis he assumes also includes a qualification about the *content* of the beliefs being justified:

Simultaneous access internalism: Only facts specially cognitively accessible to the agent at time *t* are justifiers of the agent's belief held at *t* **about facts at time *t***.

Goldman does not include this qualifier about content in his statement of the internalist thesis in "Internalism Exposed." But the examples of the justification of beliefs about history and geography would call internalism into question only because the facts of history and geography in question are not simultaneous with the act of justification, the content, or occurrence of the belief being justified. And as we have seen, especially in his later work (2009), Goldman makes his commitment to this qualifier even more explicit. For instance, he makes much of the fact that Conee and Feldman regard internalism as a *supervenience* thesis, as the claim that justification supervenes on *current* mental states which are said to be the justifiers (2009, 4 fn6, 14, 19). And he claims quite explicitly that the internalist requires that "a recall event at time *t* generates justifiedness for believing its content at the same time *t*. The J-factor (the recall event) is simultaneous with the (dated) J-status to which it is relevant" (2009, 15).

Interestingly, the assumption that internalism requires simultaneous access to the justifiers also explains Goldman's worry that non-occurrent beliefs would be unjustified on internalism. If, in order to justify a given occurrent belief, we have to retrieve additional stored beliefs, this takes more time. So his assumption that internalism must be simultaneous access internalism leads to both of the problems mentioned above, the problem of accessing stored as opposed to occurrent beliefs, *and* the problem that the justifiers of many beliefs are in the past. On the whole, Goldman seems to assume that internalism requires a kind of *unmediated* access to the justifiers. He attributes to the internalist a kind of hyper-Cartesian view about the nature of the objects of our awareness, and proceeds to show the variety of ways in which this hyper-Cartesianism leads to skepticism. Perhaps some internalists really are sympathetic to this view. But do they need to be?

4. Is the simultaneity requirement essential to internalism?

Why are layers of mediation—between our stored beliefs and the facts that justify them, or between us and our stored beliefs—assumed to be a problem for the internalist?

There are internalists who give priority to memory impressions or apparent memory experience in the generation of justification (Pollock and Cruz 1999), and they may accept simultaneous access internalism. But as

Goldman (2009) notes, this view has been sharply criticized by philosophers like Huemer (1999), who point out that this view would classify as justified memories generated through wishful thinking and other patently non-justifying sources. There are other criticisms. Generally I agree with Goldman's and Huemer's criticisms here, and I agree that memory *preserves* past justification and is, therefore, "historical." But why assume that a historical, preservative view of memory implies that we do not have conscious access to the past? Do we misuse the term "access" when we say that we have *physical* access to *physical* places that are not immediately present? In section 5, I will challenge the assumption here about the requirements of conscious access using the resources of direct realism.

If Conee and Feldman (and other internalists) really do accept a supervenience thesis, and if supervenience relations are usually cashed out as kinds of simultaneous determination relations, they may also accept a form of simultaneous access internalism. But why can't the justification afforded to stored beliefs supervene on *past* mental or other states?⁸ Perhaps a relationship to past states cannot be a supervenience relation (and not everyone agrees to this), but then perhaps some other relation of determination could describe internalist justification. In either case it is still not clear why access to justifiers must be simultaneous.

Goldman argues that to abandon the simultaneity requirement amounts to abandoning a central motivation for adopting internalism in the first place. He claims that since Descartes, traditional internalists have always sought to explain justification from "one's current mental states and nothing more" (2009, 19). Of course I believe that the possibility of formulating a version of direct realism about perception demonstrates that the dependence on *mental* states is not essential to internalism. What about the dependence on *current* states of any kind? It's true that "clear and distinct perception" is paradigmatic kind of knowledge and source of justification for Descartes—as traditional an internalist as anyone—and this perception appears to require access to "current mental states." But even for Descartes, what we have immediate access to through clear and distinct perception does not exhaust the range of our justifiers. In "Rules for the Direction of our Native Intelligence," he says that "immediate self-evidence is not required for deduction, as it is for intuition; deduction in a sense gets its certainty from memory" (Descartes 1628/1988, pg. 4). Deduction is a paradigm form of knowledge for Descartes and it depends on justifiers—premises—which are necessarily considered prior in time to the conclusions they justify. Granted, it may not take *much* time to move from the premises to the conclusion of a syllogism, but it is time spent nonetheless. Longer, more complex proofs may still be taken to embody a source of certainty even if they involve so many steps that

⁸ See Bernecker (2004) for arguments to the effect that it does and must supervene on past states.

some of their premises exit immediate consciousness as the reasoner moves step by step on towards the conclusion. It appears that even Descartes is not the hyper-Cartesian that Goldman thinks internalists must be.

So, even mentalist internalists like Descartes (and Locke) do not necessarily embrace the simultaneity requirement.⁹ It's a good thing: even access to internal mental states involves processing that occurs over time. Not only do we need time to access our stored beliefs, but we may even need it to access *occurrent* mental states in the relevant way. There is some sense in which occurrent sensory qualia are always *available* to consciousness, but their availability does not mean that we automatically attend to them.¹⁰ It took ages for geometers to learn how a three-dimensional scene could be projected onto a two-dimensional surface and ages further before artists could apply this insight into understanding how the visual appearance of a three-dimensional scene could be re-created using a two-dimensional canvas and the laws of perspective. The same is probably true of attention to occurrent beliefs. People can believe without knowing that they believe, and even once they realize that they have a belief, the belief does not automatically interpret itself.¹¹ There is mediation and processing at every level of consciousness, so if internalism requires a complete absence of temporal mediation, then either some internalists are even more wrong than Goldman thinks, or no one in history has ever been a serious internalist by Goldman's definition. It is possible that some are really this wrong, but it may be for lack of appreciating that to be true to the tradition of Descartes and Locke, they don't need to be hyper-Cartesians. There are perhaps many internalists who think their approach to justification requires the transparency of mental states. But as we shall see, this view of the mind is not essential to what distinguishes internalism from externalism.

Granted, Descartes, Locke and others probably side with mentalism because they are tempted by a view that approximates the simultaneity thesis. There is a long tradition of regarding mediation as the enemy of "pure" awareness, and if these epistemologists were tempted by this tradition and wanted to identify the primary objects of cognition and the sources of certainty, they would have identified internal mental states as the primary justifiers,

⁹ Much the same attitude toward the relationship between proof and memory is evident in Locke, another traditional internalist. He distinguishes intuitive from demonstrative knowledge, but regards each as equally certain, in spite of the fact that demonstrative knowledge depends upon memory, embodying "habitual" knowledge.

¹⁰ To speak of the existence of sensory qualia is not necessarily inconsistent with a direct realist view of sensory perception. The direct realist does not necessarily reject the existence of internal mental states, only the idea that these mental states are the primary and only immediate objects of awareness. It is perfectly consistent with this view that one first comes to know external objects directly through perception, and then gains the ability to turn one's awareness back on itself and engage in a kind of reductive phenomenological focus. But the important point here is that this is only possible *after* one first grasps objects in the world—and this is why it takes even more time and processing than Cartesians are likely to admit.

¹¹ Indeed, there is serious evidence from developmental psychology that children younger than 3 of 4 have no concept of "belief," and so could not possibly believe in belief—even while having many beliefs. See Perner (1993).

since these states are thought to be close to being simultaneously accessible and therefore objects of a pure form of awareness.

The question then becomes: *should* internalism be defined in terms of this simultaneity requirement? If we allow internalism to drop that thesis, and admit non-simultaneous forms of “access,” would there still be any meaningful difference between internalism and externalism? Pappas (2005) raises an interesting point against any internalist thesis that abandons the simultaneity requirement:

If accessibility internalism were merely the thesis that for each justified belief *p*, there is some time at which the cognizer can be aware of the essential justifiers for the belief that *p*, then accessibility externalism would become the thesis that there is *never* a time at which the cognizer can be reflectively aware of the relevant justifiers. Yet the externalist position is the much more modest point that there are some cases of justified belief where the cognizer is unable to be reflectively aware of the essential justifiers.

Let me grant that defining externalism as the claim that there is never a time at which the cognizer can be aware of the essential justifiers is a move that only a straw man argument against externalism would make. But there are other quantifiers implicit in a statement of the internalist thesis, and there are more ways to negate the thesis than Pappas notes here.

What if internalism were the thesis that there are times at which *any* cognizer can be aware of *all* of the essential justifiers for the belief that *p*? Externalists could negate this thesis by claiming that there are times at which *some* essential justifiers cannot be known, or by claiming that there are times at which *some* cognizers cannot be aware of some essential justifiers. This could be true even if externalists acknowledge that there are some essential justifiers that can always be known by all. In either case, the disagreement could result from a disagreement about what counts as a justifier. Goldman, for example, holds that “epistemic principles” themselves, higher-order descriptions of basic conditions of justification, count as justifiers, but internalists might disagree (as I will in section 6). Goldman claims that neither ordinary nor naïve agents can recognize these principles, and that “even many career-long epistemologists have failed to articulate and appreciate correct epistemic principles” (1999, 287). Even if the best epistemologists (presumably Goldman) can appreciate the correct principles, externalism would amount to the interesting thesis that there are no times at which any cognizer can be aware of the justifiers.

The externalist could also deny that there is any sense to be made of the distinction between “essential” and “non-essential” justifiers, and could therefore contend there do not exist any justifiers such that they are essential and that there are times at which any cognizer can be aware of them. This is a different way of characterizing Goldman’s position, but it does reflect the fact that he defines “justifiers” as any factors relevant to justification,

seeing no way of distinguishing justifying “grounds” (favorites of the internalists) from other such factors. (This is an issue I will also address in section 6.)

Externalists might also object that defining internalism in terms of non-simultaneous access would amount to a self-contradictory use of the concept of “access.” Epistemic “access” is a metaphor drawn from the concept of physical access. Suppose that at 5pm I gain access to the library stacks. But the library closes at 6pm and subsequently closes down for good because of budget cuts and a serious mold problem. It would be nonsense to suggest that I have access to the library merely because I once accessed it in the past. So the question becomes whether or not access *by consciousness* has the same constraints. Perhaps correct use of the “access” metaphor dictates a simultaneity requirement for consciousness. But then we should consider whether or not it is the best metaphor for a point about consciousness. Non-negotiable to internalism is that cognizers have some *awareness* of justifiers. If some forms of awareness are not forms of conscious access, then perhaps defining internalism in terms of “access” involves a misappropriation of what is admittedly a weak metaphor in the first place. Internalism should then be the thesis that there are times at which any cognizer can be *aware of* all of the essential justifiers for any of the cognizer’s beliefs, and externalists would negate this claim by stating that there do not exist times at which any cognizer can be aware of all of these essential justifiers. A theoretically significant difference between the positions can still be parsed here without use of the word “access.”

The serious philosophical question to be grappled with, then, is whether one can really have awareness *of the past*. The last refuge for requiring that internalism include a simultaneity thesis would have to come from the denial that acts or processes of awareness can occur over time. In the next section, we will examine this question and look at how lessons drawn from direct realism about perception can help answer it.

5. The form/object distinction and the rejection of the simultaneity thesis

By pointing to the possibility of a direct realist understanding of perception, we have already pointed to the possibility that not everything of which we have cognitive awareness is an internal mental state. At most this shows that we can admit perception as a form of justification that internalists can tolerate. It does not yet show that other paradigmatic forms of justification, such as memory, could count as such. But I will now argue that if we take seriously the possibility that perceptual justification delivers internalistic justification, other forms of cognition might as well, in spite of their not fulfilling the simultaneity requirement.

Let us recall what the direct realist means by saying that perception is “direct”: mainly, this means that it is not a product of inference from premises about internal representational states. Of course the direct realist does not mean to deny that perceptual awareness involves various forms of physiological processing. The point is that these physical means are irrelevant to the directness of the cognition or to its status *as* cognition. Perception is direct in contrast to a form of cognition like inference, which is regarded as indirect because it draws conclusions about what is not perceived on the basis of what is (Austin, 1962). So perception is direct in the relevant sense, even though perceptual processing occurs over time. There is obviously a tiny lag between the time that light leaves an object, strikes our retina, is processed by our brain and the time at which we have perceptual awareness of the object. Indeed, the direct realist might argue that because of this time lag, there simply is no specific time at which we perceive an object. Perception is by its nature an occurrence over time.

For the direct realist, the fact that it takes time to perceive is no more barrier to the directness of cognition or to its status of being cognition than is the fact that perception is limited in other ways. We perceive only in a certain *form* that is determined by the nature of our perceptual apparatus: only one side of an object, only in certain colors, tones, etc. And we perceive by a definite, limited *means*: only through certain physical organs, specific frequencies of light or sound, only under conditions when our brains and bodies are functioning properly, etc. We are aware of objects in a specific form and by a definite means, but none of this is a barrier to its being what it is: a form of awareness of the world. We do not have to know everything to know something. Just as our knowledge is limited in its content, so it is limited in its power. We have knowledge even though we know limited amounts of information about objects, and even though we do not know it instantaneously.

According to direct realism, one important mistake made by many forms of indirect realism, is to confuse the *form* of awareness with its *object*.¹² Assuming that the objects of our knowledge must be completely and instantaneously apprehended, some indirect realists think that because we perceive a straight stick in water as bent, for example, the bent image must be the immediate object of our awareness. They argue that our connection to the

¹² See Huemer (2001, pp. 81-2), Kelley (1986, 41-2; 86-95), and Peikoff (1991, 44-52). Some forms of representationalism purport to “direct realist” insofar as they disavow the claim that we are immediately aware of internal mental objects, but still insist that perceptual content is “representational” in the sense that it can be true or false, veridical or non-veridical. This is certainly a common position in the philosophy of perception, but I want to suggest that even this view of perceptual content as “representational” commits a similar error of conflating the form and object of awareness. In order to justify the claim that perceptual content is sometimes non-veridical, these representationalists must claim that the senses represent things as looking *F* when in fact things are not *F*. But there are direct realist analysis of “looking *F*” available which do not have this implication, such as “A subject’s perceptual awareness of an object in context a is similar to his perceptual awareness of an *F* object in context b, and the object is not *F* in context a.” This analysis removes the rationale for representationalism about perceptual content, but is typically opposed by the claim that “looking *F*” is metaphysically irreducible or otherwise unanalyzable. But it turns out that this position is defensible only on the assumption that concepts of perceptual appearance can be formed by abstraction directly from perceptual *qualia* available to internal consciousness—the typical view of the early modern representationalist. For more explaining this perspective on more moderate forms of representationalism, see Bayer (forthcoming).

stick itself is cognitively mediated: we neither apprehend all of it nor apprehend it instantaneously. But our connection to the *appearance* of the stick's being bent—how it looks—is supposed to be total and instantaneous.¹³ According to the direct realist, however, to assume that the appearance of the stick is a direct object of awareness but that the stick is not is to confuse *how* we are aware of the stick with *what* we are actually aware of. We are aware of the stick in a *form* that resembles the form in which we are aware of an actually bent stick, but the object of our awareness is a straight stick.¹⁴ Direct realists would not deny that we can become aware of our form of awareness (as when an artist reflects on her ability to perceive) but they regard as unsuccessful the arguments for treating perceptual form as the *primary* object of awareness. At best, perceptual form need never become an object, and if it does, it is secondary and dependent on perception of external objects.

If direct realists are right and there is a distinction between the form or means of awareness and the object of awareness, we have no reason to accept the simultaneity requirement. If even perception does not fulfill the simultaneity requirement, but it can still be a *direct* form of awareness for all that, then surely others forms of awareness can at least be *indirect* forms of awareness without fulfilling the simultaneity requirement. And according to the direct realist, we can understand perception as a direct form of awareness, provided that we do not confuse the form and object of perception. Without that distinction, we might be tempted to think of the object of perceptual awareness as an unmediated mental object, and conclude that our allegedly simultaneous awareness of it is a requirement for awareness as such. But we should maintain the distinction and also remember that not even awareness of the mental is unmediated. So we have no reason to accept the simultaneity requirement.

The lesson to draw about memory is obviously not that we have direct access to the justifiers of our stored beliefs, the objects in the external world in the past that generated them in the first place.¹⁵ Clearly, because the origins of our memories may be in the distant past, we do not have direct awareness of them in any way, especially not anything like the way we have direct awareness of the objects of perception.¹⁶ Memories are still indirect in

¹³ As discussed earlier, even access to our form of awareness, to the phenomenal qualities of our awareness, is not itself unmediated.

¹⁴ For more on how direct realists analyze illusions and other cases of putative sensory fallibility, see Bayer (forthcoming).

¹⁵ So as Goldman himself suggests, it is better to remove the directness requirement for justifiers from the internalist criterion of justification, especially from the accessibilist variety. I maintain that it is not *ad hoc* to do so. Goldman thinks there was no reason to bring directness into a definition of justification in the first place. I think that direct knowability *is* a criterion for a *foundational* justifier, if not for all justifiers: it is needed to avoid various regress problems for basic beliefs. If we make the direct realist case for foundationalism, we should expect basic justifiers to be direct, and derivative justifiers indirect. But as we shall see shortly, the “special cognitive awareness” shorthand that we have used in the place of the directness requirement is still important, because it helps indicate a crucial similarity between direct and indirect justifiers. Memories are related to direct perceptual awareness in a crucial way that permits them to count as justifiers. In fact, since we are only trying to define “justifier,” rather than “basic justifier,” there is no special reason to talk about *special* cognitive awareness. We need only speak of awareness. Only internalists tempted by mentalism need to use the “special” qualifier to distinguish introspection from other forms of awareness allegedly distinct by virtue of not being constrained by the simultaneity thesis.

¹⁶ Since direct perception also gives us access to the near past, the question asked will be: where do we draw the line between the near and the distant? I fully concede that difference is a matter of degree. But it is a difference in degree that is understood well by neuropsychologists. The

comparison to the perceptual experiences from which they were first acquired, just like inferences are indirect in relation to the observations from which the inferences are drawn.

If the form/object distinction does not give us a way to understand stored beliefs as affording direct awareness of justifiers, how does it help us understand how memories can afford internalistic justification? The main lesson is that even if we do not have direct awareness of the objects of memory, we can still have genuine *awareness* of them, even if it is not simultaneous with the objects themselves. The lesson from direct realism is that the same form/object distinction that underwrites its account of the objects of perception and of the justifiers of perceptual belief also helps us to understand why the simultaneity thesis is false for every kind of justifier, especially the indirect justifiers of memory.¹⁷ Memory is a distinctive form of awareness: an *awareness of the non-immediate past*.¹⁸ It is true that the past does not *now* exist. But it did exist, and memory is an awareness of what *was*.

Especially as an indirect form of awareness, memory is of limited power, in particular insofar as it fades over time. Everyone has experienced the problem of “false memories,” constructed over time by wishful thinking, by slight mutations in the telling and retelling of a story, etc. I want to urge that none of this should call into question the claim that memory is a form of awareness of the past. According to many direct realists, there is an important distinction to be drawn between perception and judgment formed on the basis of perception. Even if one forms false judgments about the objects of perception, one’s perception is still an awareness of real objects. Even if one falsely concludes that a stick in water is bent, the error is not in one’s perception, but in one’s judgment on the basis of the perception of a (straight) stick. (There may be cases apart from illusions—examples involving synesthesia come to mind—in which the allegation of perceptual error is more plausible, but even the apparent fallibility of the senses in

only tricky cases are those like our perception of stars, which obviously existed in the distant past. I think this perception is to be understood on the model of other optical illusions, especially those involving mirages. In star “perception,” we perceive light (if we can call this perception at all, since it involves no differentiation of an object from a background) as if it were a present object, but there is no present object. Objects like the moon are trickier since there is clear discrimination of an object against a background, and in this case I would argue that it is indeed perception, but perception of a past object. There is no problem here if perception’s objects need not be instantaneous. The only problem is that we might judge the object to have present existence, which would be a false belief. In the same way we might judge the stick in water to be bent, even though it is not. That we make this false judgment does not mean that we perceive an actually bent object, and that we may make a false judgment about perceiving a presently existing moon does not mean that we are perceiving a presently existing moon.

¹⁷The form/object distinction was first drawn explicitly by Aquinas in his critique of Plato’s theory of universals: he argued that the fact that we *conceive* of the world through universal concepts does not imply that the objects of our conceptual awareness are real universal entities. Rather, we cognize particular *objects* in a universal way, or form. (See *Summa Theologica*, Part I, Question 85, Article 2. <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1085.htm>> See also Pasnau (2002, 318-20)). Recently, I argued (2011) that the same distinction helps show how the psychology of concept-formation and application can inform a theory of justification without implying that the involvement of psychological processing renders this theory of justification subjective. So, just as the form/object distinction can inform our understanding of the epistemic role of the psychology of perception and of concept-formation, it can do the same for our understanding of the epistemic role of the psychology of memory in general, and stored beliefs in particular.

¹⁸Of course what I urged above is that even perception involves a time lag, in which case it is also a sort of awareness of the past. So technically what divides perception from memory in terms of time is a matter of degree. But I presume it is not arbitrary, since perception and memory work through identifiably different brain mechanisms.

these cases is disputed by some direct realists.¹⁹) Analogously, if one falsely concludes on the basis of a memory that one caught the biggest fish in Wisconsin, still one might be remembering a fish that one caught. Memorial *judgments* are only a *prima facie* source of justification, subject to defeat, especially as we learn the conditions under which we are more or less likely to form them well. But the raw data of memory (if it really *is* memory—a qualification soon to be discussed) is analogous to delayed perception and distinct from memorial judgment. It is, therefore, veridical *per se*.

Direct realists also answer arguments from hallucination by clearly distinguishing between perception and hallucination. Hallucination is *not* perception, and its failure to correspond to reality does not impugn perception's ability to do so. Even if one falsely concludes that there are pink elephants dancing across the bar, one is simply *not* perceiving, but engaging in organically-induced, involuntary imagination. The veridicality of undamaged sensory perception is not impugned. "False" memories should be treated along the same lines as hallucination. Even if one falsely concludes that one was abused by aliens on the basis of a memory impression ginned up by a therapist's suggestions, this does not impugn the claim that *memory* is of the real past. This is a "false memory" in the sense that it is not a real memory, but the product of imagination. For this reason, if we know the ways in which remembered facts can be confused with remembered fantasies, this is another way in which our memorial *judgments* can be subject to defeat. But the raw data of memory itself is not.

There is still a significant question about how one could ever discriminate between perception and hallucination, or between a real memory and an imagined memory (or memory of something imagined). But this is no longer a question about perception or memory as a source of justification. It is a challenge for anyone, internalist or externalist, who wishes to answer skeptical doubts that arise because of any potential source of error with respect to any source of justification. There are positions available to address the challenge which I will not go into in detail here. There is, for example, the "disjunctivist" view in the philosophy of perception which says that even if we cannot discriminate between veridical perception and hallucination, still they do not share an object or the same justificatory status, and the possibility of knowledge in the veridical case is not impugned by the possibility of error in the other case. There could easily be a form of disjunctivism about memory, one which decouples questions about the ability to discriminate real and false memories from questions about their justificatory status. There are also more general anti-skeptical strategies in epistemology which delimit the types of errors we need to be able to rule

¹⁹ See footnote #12, and Bayer (forthcoming).

out in order to claim knowledge. Externalists like Dretske (1970) think we need only rule out “relevant alternatives” to our proposed conclusions, and these do not include skeptical scenarios; Huemer (2007) thinks we can dismiss epistemic possibilities (such as deception by evil demons) that are inconsistent with our *prima facie* evidence; Austin (1947) even thinks we need a *special reason* to engage in doubt in the first place, suggesting that there is a burden on any claim that we might be mistaken, etc. There is, of course, debate about whether any of these anti-skeptical strategies work, but this debate often takes place separately from the internalism/externalism debate, which usually arises instead from debates about the analysis of the concept of knowledge and in the context of the evidentialism/anti-evidentialism controversy.

At the same time, while we may not need to rule out the possibility that our memories were systematically manipulated by an evil demon, we still do need to rule out possibilities of specific known sources of error. For instance if we know we don't generally notice people's clothing because of lack of interest in fashion, we would have to rule out the serious possibility that any memory we have of what someone was wearing on a prior date is unreliable. The element of truth in the simultaneous access, mentalist formulation of internalism is that even if memory counts as a form of awareness of the past *per se*, the possibility of making justified *judgments* about the past requires constant mental vigilance. At an early age we must become aware of the general reliability of memory (for example, by noting how we remember the location of hard-to-move objects, and how we see that they generally stay where we remember seeing them). We then learn the conditions under which one is likely to form reliable memories and those under which one is not (for example, we remember well when doing so is very important to us; not always otherwise). So memorial judgments are subject to defeat, and we must be on constant lookout for defeaters, and to do this, we need to have an awareness of the conditions for something's being a defeater. While one needs to be aware of something as a potential defeater to dispense with a belief as unjustified, and while we need the same awareness to retain a belief as justified by ruling out a potential defeater as irrelevant, our access to background knowledge about reliability conditions and the like could *itself* be an awareness of facts in the past. One may need to think of one's knowledge *as* one's knowledge in order to access it effectively, and this may require attention to one's mental states as such. But this awareness of our form of awareness of the past is only made possible by the fact that it is first and foremost awareness of facts in the past. The justifiers are fundamentally the facts in the past that justify our stored beliefs, even those about conditions of reliability. Stored beliefs may be

mental states, and justify still other beliefs, but we can only appreciate them as doing this if we acknowledge that they are justified by something other than mental states in the first place.²⁰

6. Factors relevant to justification vs. justifiers

The internalist ought to agree that reflective human knowledge requires not only awareness of justifiers, but sensitivity to the conditions of justification. But it is possible to misunderstand the internalist on this point, and assume that the need for this sensitivity implies the need to know *all* of the conditions of knowledge in order to know anything, in the same way that the hyper-Cartesian supposes that we must have totally unmediated awareness of the object to be aware of it at all. Not too surprisingly, this is how Goldman reads the internalist.

To see why this reading is wrong, consider the objection that if our preferred form of internalism counts even past external facts as justifiers, it becomes indistinguishable from externalism. Earlier in section 4 we started to deal with this objection, when we noted that externalism is still significantly different from internalism in holding that there are not times at which any cognizer can be aware of all of the essential justifiers for any of the cognizer's beliefs, perhaps because there are some justifiers of which at least some subjects cannot be aware. This disagreement results from a dramatic difference between internalists' and externalists' definitions of "justifier." Consider Goldman's later (2009) definition, borrowed largely from Alston:

A justifier of any belief or other doxastic attitude is any property, condition, or state of affairs (and so on) that is positively or negatively relevant to the justificational status of that attitude. (3)

Goldman further specifies that the kind of relevance he has in mind here is explanatory: something is relevant to a belief's justificatory status if it helps to explain why the belief is justified as it is.

²⁰ There is still a legitimate worry about how, if justifiers—especially indirect ones—are not constrained by the simultaneity thesis, we are to avoid the implication that we can and do have awareness of anything at any time and place in the history of the universe with which we have a causal connection. What ties together examples of genuine awareness, direct or indirect, in principle? *Indirect* awareness itself is defined in relation to and in virtue of a connection to some form of *direct* awareness: we say *in relation to* direct awareness because it does not deliver the same certainty that direct awareness of the same object or fact would; and we say *in virtue of* direct awareness because what certainty it does deliver derives from a causal relationship to some direct awareness of an object or fact. So, for example, my memory of my second birthday is an indirect form of awareness of my second birthday, in that if I were to perceive my second birthday, the event would be clear and distinct compared to the memory, and in that my current memory is based on my past perception of the event. This affords the possibility of giving a kind of recursive definition of "justifier," using direct awareness as the base case.

X is a justifier of an agent's belief if and only if X is an object of direct awareness (perceptual or introspective), or an object of indirect awareness in virtue of another justifier.

Since the purpose of my paper is not to argue extensively for a particular definition, I leave "in virtue of" unanalyzed here, and merely gesture towards the claim that the "in virtue of" relation is whatever is common to the relation a memory bears to its source in perception, a conclusion bears to its perceptually-based premises, and other conclusions bear to non-perceptually-based premises. I also leave aside further discussion of what it is to be an *object* of awareness, and the relation that objects bear to facts, or the relation that awareness of objects or of facts bears to propositional knowledge. But see Bayer (2011) for more on how the direct realist foundationalist would account for the justification of beliefs in propositional form on the basis of non-propositional perception via a theory of the abstraction of concepts from perceived similarities and differences

To take one example: when Goldman describes his view of perceptual justification, he claims that the best way to circumvent various regress problems is to consider perceptual experience as a nondoxastic state with nonconceptual content (so not requiring justification of its own), and as one that disposes a subject to believe some proposition. But according to Goldman, there must be a rule specifying the conditions under which such experience actually justifies, including “the perceptual cues or operations that properly license belief in such a proposition” (2009, 22). Without specifying these conditions, we might think that beliefs resulting from emotional dispositions triggered by irrelevant perceptual cues count as justified, even when they are clearly not. Goldman mentions binocular disparity and “eye convergence” as the relevant perceptual cues for reliable depth perception (23). In his original statement of the problem of stored beliefs, he also described some of the conditions under which memory is likely to be reliable: memories involving more perceptual information and more meaningful detail, and which lack “records of intentional constructive and organizational processes” are more likely to have actually resulted from perception (1999, 291). We presume that cognitive psychologists are in a position to identify similar conditions of reliability for any number of other cognitive mechanisms.

By Goldman’s understanding of what it is to be a “justifier,” all of these conditions for perceptual and memorial reliability count as *justifiers*, because they help explain what makes justification possible. And yet, when we possess perceptual or memorial knowledge, we do not necessarily have awareness of facts concerning binocular disparity, eye convergence, the degree of perceptual detail, or marks of intentional construction. This is Goldman’s point: these are facts “external” to the knower’s knowledge (if not to her cognitive system), and so these facts supposedly count as justifiers only on an externalist view. Indeed the internalist will concede that most of these are factors that do help *explain* how various beliefs are justified, since they are causally relevant to the justificational status of the resulting beliefs. But to the internalist, they are not *justifiers*. In internalism, only some factors relevant to justification count as justifiers, and so the fact that we don’t know about these conditions of reliability doesn’t necessarily count as a mark against internalism. How, then, do we resolve this definitional dispute between internalists and externalists? Are justifiers any factors that are explanatorily relevant to a belief’s justificational status, or are they only a subset of these factors? And is this definitional dispute simply a verbal dispute, or is there a serious conceptual dispute here about our prior understanding of “justifier”?

Goldman considers the possibility that his definition of a justifier is unfairly broad, and notes as an alternative one given in terms of Alston’s concept of an epistemic “ground”: it is not enough that a justifier be

relevant to justificational status, it must also be the *basis* of a belief (2009, 29).²¹ Goldman thinks this will not do, because he thinks there are examples of groundless but justified belief: “Someone can justifiably believe a certain factoid for which he once had evidence he has since forgotten entirely.” I cannot fully address this objection here, because it depends on addressing the second problem he raises for internalism, the problem of “forgotten evidence” (1999, 280-1). For now I will just assert that I don’t think that truly ungrounded beliefs *are* justified. In a longer treatment, I would explain how Goldman’s examples of justified beliefs whose evidence has been forgotten seem justified because they are beliefs for which one is likely to have since acquired additional confirming evidence. But further, there are probably fewer beliefs than Goldman supposes whose evidence is *entirely* forgotten evidence. His standard for what counts as forgotten presupposes that if we do not remember very particular details, we have forgotten the evidence. But it is also possible that we retain awareness of past evidence in a more general *form* than that in which we originally acquired it. Here again the direct realist’s form/object distinction is useful apparatus for understanding the nature of epistemic justifiers.

In any case, Goldman’s second response to the definition of “justifier” in terms of “ground” is more revealing, and I’ll focus on it. At first this response sounds entirely question-begging (as often happens in disputes about definitions): “a belief’s grounds are just one among many types of factors relevant to a belief’s justifiedness” (2009, 29). Besides the grounds, Goldman points to many other relevant facts: “(1) support relations, (2) instantiation facts, (3) historical events that bear on premise-belief justifiedness, (4) right rules, and (5) the ground or standard of rightness.” He also mentions “cognitive processes that constitute or underlie the ‘basing’ relation” (2009, 29). Here his response seems fallacious because it seems that these other factors “relevant to justifiedness” are counterexamples to the internalist’s definition only if we already accept that merely being relevant to justifiedness is enough to make something a justifier—and this is the very question up for debate.

I doubt Goldman would beg the question so obviously, so I think what he is really saying here is that there is nothing special about a justifying ground that distinguishes it from any other factor relevant to justification. In answer to this, it is again useful to invoke the direct realist’s form/object distinction. There is something *epistemically important* that distinguishes epistemic grounds from other factors relevant to justificatory status. My contention is that epistemic grounds are *objects of awareness*, and other factors relevant to justificatory status are *means* or *forms* of awareness—and this is an epistemologically important way to subdivide the many factors that are

²¹ “Ground” is probably a concept I would need to use to explicate the “in virtue of” relation in my statement of awareness internalism.

merely relevant to justification. The fact that our awareness works through a specific means and comes in a specific form *does* explain why some of our beliefs are justified and others are not. But we must subdivide factors relevant to justificatory status according to how they bear on different purposes we have in providing epistemic explanations. To see why we should conceptualize only some factors relevant to justification as “justifiers,” it is worth thinking about why we need a concept of “justifier” at all.

If a “justifier” is anything, it is *something that justifies*, something that provides justification.²² But consider a parallel concept: “circulator.” There is an important difference between the *thing* that circulates blood (the heart) and the *means* by which it circulates it. If biologists categorized every fact that helped explain the fact of circulation as a “circulator,” biology would descend into hopeless confusion. Not only would the heart be a circulator, but so would all of the facts about blood vessels, all of the facts about blood serum that make it an ideal medium for blood cells, all of the facts about blood cells that let them circulate through the serum, all of the facts about every cell in the body, since every cell in the body ultimately contributes to the living process and enables the process of circulation. But facts about the *heart* explain the process of circulation in a way that is importantly different from all of these other facts. This is why biologists categorize the heart as the organ whose *function* it is to circulate (as a “circulator”). Following Wright (1976), we can say that the heart’s function is to circulate blood if and only if a) it acts in a way that regularly brings about circulation, and b) it acts in this way *because* it brings about circulation. That is: if past hearts in our evolutionary history or past events in the history of *our* heart did not act in a way that regularly resulted in circulation, our heart would not circulate presently at all (it would not exist). So we call a heart the *circulator* because conceptualizing *its* function as circulation helps us understand the very nature of its own action. We cannot understand the action of the lungs in the same way, even though that action indirectly contributes to circulation. Further, understanding the distinctive action of each organ helps us understand how the different parts of an organism interact with each other to form an organic whole.

So we conceptualize only the heart as the circulator, and not just any other factors that bear somehow on the fact of circulation, because this is consistent with the explanatory goals of biology. Because biology seeks to understand how species evolve bit by bit, it looks for the distinctive function served by each element of an organism insofar as it can be said to have one.²³ So the overarching goal of the science of biology—of understanding

²² Strictly speaking, I think that if we’re looking for a *thing* that justifies, we should look for an *agent*, a knower, because justification is an act of the knower. But I think it is fine to conceptualize the material used by the knower as “justifier” or “justifiers,” in an extended sense.

²³ Probably there are also practical medical interests that condition this conceptualization as well, since we need to know which part of a body to fix when damage to it (i.e., to its function) impairs the health of the whole body. I don’t see practical interests like this as at odds with purely

organisms by reference to their evolutionary development, in order to see the deeper relationships among different organisms—helps determine how its central explanatory concepts are to be formed. By the same token, however, we should conceptualize the central explanatory concepts of the science of epistemology by reference to the overarching goals of this field. But what are its goals? If we can identify them, it will help us see why epistemology needs a concept of “justifier.” If it is a functional concept like “circulator,” then referring to the wider explanatory goals of epistemology will help us understand what to designate as an epistemically relevant function.

Internalists and externalists typically differ over the goals of the field of epistemology. Externalists tend to approach it naturalistically, from the perspective of a third-party scientist interested in predicting and explaining the behavior of knowing organisms, while internalists approach the field from the first-person perspective of providing guidance to the individual knower. Historically, naturalists adopted their goal because they saw the traditional goal as impossible to achieve using internalistic resources. But the present discussion is about whether they were right to assess internalism in this way. Goldman recognizes this by taking for granted the traditional goal of epistemology in his reconstruction of the overall argument for internalism (1999):

- (1) The *guidance-deontological (GD) conception of justification* is posited.
- (2) A certain constrain on the determiners of justification is derived from the GD conception, that is, the constraint that all justification determiners must be *accessible to*, or *knowable by*, the epistemic agent.
- (3) The accessibility or knowability constraint is taken to imply that only internal conditions qualify as legitimate determiners of justification. So justification must be a purely internal affair. (272)

The “guidance-deontological conception” of justification—which I will simply call the *guidance* conception—is the idea that “one central aim of epistemology is to guide or direct our intellectual conduct” (272). As Goldman observes, this aim was central to the ideas of Descartes and Locke, the founders of modern epistemology, who sought to give us “Rules for the Direction of the Mind.” Arguably it is this guidance conception, far more than any simultaneity requirement, that is truly essential to internalism, and to traditional Western epistemology as a whole. Descartes and Locke both went so far as to conclude (3), the thesis of mentalism, on the grounds that they thought only mental states were knowable by epistemic agents and therefore the only possible source of epistemic guidance for these agents. But our argument for internalism can stop at (2).²⁴ What is significant here is that in the course of

epistemic standards of conceptualization, as long as we recognize that by conceptualizing facts in a manner that best helps us achieve our goals, we are still conceptualizing real similarities and differences.

²⁴ There is some minor sloppiness on Goldman’s part here, because even on *his* (Alston-inspired) conception of a “justifier,” the justifier is not necessarily the *guidance* itself, but *whatever determines* the nature of the guidance, whatever determines the justificatory status of our beliefs. But his general description of the link between the guidance conception and internalism is still correct: if we need to guide our beliefs, we need to *know* whatever is needed to know how to guide our beliefs.

making an argument for the nature of our justifiers, the argument begins with a statement of the overall goal of the field of epistemology. This should help us determine the proper way to conceptualize the concept “justifier.”

Goldman observes, of course, that internalism might be undermined simply by challenging the truth of the guidance conception. In particular, he cites the work of Alston (1988), which alleges that the guidance conception presupposes doxastic voluntarism, the idea that there is an important sense in which we choose our beliefs, which implies that we need guidance in their formation. Goldman says that he sympathizes with Alston’s critique of voluntarism, but that Feldman (1988) and Heil (1983) have attempted to decouple the guidance conception from voluntarism.²⁵ Because of the independent controversy here, Goldman assumes the guidance conception for the sake of argument. We should, too. If, *like Goldman*, we take the guidance conception of epistemology for granted, *this implicitly determines how we should understand the concept of a “justifier,”* and it will imply a definition of the concept at odds with both Goldman’s and Alston’s. Goldman seems to neglect this as he proceeds through his article, as he rarely makes reference back to the guidance conception again after he arrives at his statement of the thesis of “strong” internalism. Assuming that a justifier is anything that makes a difference to the justificatory status of our beliefs, he describes the variety of such “justifiers” that we do not have conscious access to.

As argued earlier, “justifier” is a functional concept, like “circulator.” We call those things “justifiers” which function a certain way in our cognitive life, and we conceptualize actions by their functions because of their explanatory significance. If we accept for the sake of argument that the overall goal of epistemology is to guide the formation of our beliefs, then functional explanatory concepts in epistemology like “justifier” ought to reflect this.²⁶ Accepting that goal, we want to understand for ourselves how to acquire knowledge; what we want to explain is how the subject guides his thinking to acquire knowledge. Factors that causally enable a subject to acquire knowledge without the subject’s awareness are surely relevant to offering a scientific explanation of the overall process of the acquisition of knowledge, but they are not relevant to explaining to the subject how *she* is to acquire knowledge. So if epistemology is for offering this kind of guidance, and “justifier” is a central concept of

²⁵ I do not agree that the guidance conception can be so easily decoupled from voluntarism, or that it is necessary to do so. I believe there is a defense of voluntarism available that answers the most important objections to it (from Alston), and which shows that the sense in which we choose our beliefs is precisely the sense in which our beliefs are subject to epistemic evaluation. See Salmieri and Bayer, “How We Choose Our Beliefs,” <<http://www.benbayer.com/how-we-choose-our-beliefs.pdf>>.

²⁶ I consider even a guidance-oriented normative concept like justification to be an explanatory concept. While externalists and naturalists seek to offer a descriptive explanation the origin of our knowledge from a third-person perspective without offering guidance to the individual knower, I think there is such a thing as *normative, guidance-oriented explanation*. The conflict between internalist and externalist theories is not between explanatory and non-explanatory theories, but between two conceptions of explanation, one normative, and the other merely descriptive. Internalistic epistemic guidance is available to knowers insofar as they have come to know, in whatever rudimentary terms, some general criteria of justification and knowing. To be able to give a justification for their beliefs is, therefore, to be able to cite the justifiers which account for their knowledge, which explain how they have come to know what they now know.

epistemology, its definition must be parsed in terms of offering this guidance. If justifiers are what justify our beliefs, then we must conceptualize “justifiers” as the *materials* with which the knower works in performing the act of justifying his beliefs. But the materials with which a knower works are *objects of the knower’s awareness*, direct or indirect. Such factors as perceptual and memory cues are of course necessary components of the *process* of establishing new knowledge by acts of justification, essential parts of the tools that operate on the materials of knowledge. But they are not the objects of the knowers’ awareness (as Goldman knows). They are the *form* or the *means by which the act of justification is performed*. So they are not the justifiers.

The form/object distinction from direct realism helps us conceptualize one of the central explanatory concepts in the field of epistemology, “justifier.” A *justifier* is an object of awareness conceptualized from the perspective of its ability to help us purposefully acquire some additional item of knowledge, not just any and every form of or means to achieving this awareness. So, for example, the most obvious justifiers are the everyday objects of our perceptual awareness that ground our perceptual beliefs. Any of these beliefs can then become justifiers themselves when they serve as premises in inductive or deductive inferences. They become “objects” of awareness insofar as they are occurrent in consciousness and are taken to be relevant to the conclusions drawn in these inferences. Objects and propositions, the traditional fare of the logician and epistemologist, emerge as the exclusive stuff of justification—and this should not come as a surprise.

If the development above is correct, we do not need conscious awareness of every psychological process involved in the justification of our beliefs in order to be justified.²⁷ Goldman’s understanding of “justifier” is inconsistent with the very purpose of epistemology he allows us to take for granted.

²⁷ The fact that some cognitive process is from one perspective a means to or form of awareness does not mean it will never be a justifier in any context. There can be some cases in which one must become aware of one’s means of awareness—i.e., make it into a new object of awareness—in order to achieve awareness of still other objects or facts.

A simple example is becoming explicitly aware of visual perspective. According to the direct realist, this reductive phenomenological focus is not necessary to be aware of three-dimensional objects—it is not even necessary to be aware of the distance or other spatial relationships among these objects, because it is the form of awareness, not the object. But being able to conceptualize our form of awareness and focus on it as a new object of awareness is necessary to formulate premises in inferences about how to represent three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional canvas. By turning our perspectival form of visual awareness into a new object of awareness, the artist is able to acquire still further knowledge about the relationships between perceivers and objects.

Another example is becoming aware explicitly of the logical relationships that govern simple syllogistic reasoning. The child does not need to know that all instances of the syllogism *Barbara* are valid in order to see the logical relationship between “All slate chips easily,” “This stone is slate,” and the conclusion “This stone will chip easily” (See Kelley 1991). But she does need to recognize that, and recognize other explicit principles of logical reasoning, in order to identify more complicated syllogistic or other deductive forms as valid.

7. Conclusion

There is much in Goldman's (1999, 2009) case against internalism I cannot address here. But I think most of his other problems rely on the assumption of the simultaneity thesis, and my claim is that we must reject this assumption.²⁸ If we take the direct realist theory of perception to be at least a serious challenger to indirect realist theories, I believe I have shown that it offers at least a serious challenge to many of the standard assumptions of externalist critiques of internalism.

Speaking more ambitiously, rejecting the simultaneity thesis and the more general view that consciousness must be unmediated helps us better understand the relationship between the concept of "knowledge" and other epistemic concepts.²⁹ Justification, to Goldman's internalist, is an instantaneous, unmediated form of access to an immediately present fact. Since "knowledge" is defined in terms of "justification," according to Goldman, knowledge to an internalist would also be a fleeting, ephemeral state. But this runs contrary to some very entrenched, ordinary views about knowledge: that it is built up over time, that once it is, it becomes a kind of retained product, etc. What is a *knower*, according to Goldman's internalist? Something as fleeting as the knowledge the knower has, existing only in instantaneous time slices, like a Humean self. But such a self is really no self at all. A real self is a being who endures over time, and who has a conception of himself as enduring over time. There is some virtue-epistemological lesson to be drawn here: we cannot fully understand what it is to know without understanding something about what it is to be a knower. Knowers and knowledge endure over time because *acts* of knowing endure over time. The concept of "justification" derives from a verb, *to justify*. On the view I am urging, justification is an act whereby the knower comes to know.³⁰

²⁸ Most prominently, his problems of *concurrent retrieval*, of the *doxastic decision interval*, and of *computational relations* all involve the same mistake. It is my hope to analyze these problems in more detail elsewhere.

²⁹ This is true in more ways than we can elaborate upon here. Both parties to the internalism/externalism debate typically assume that knowledge is a concept to be defined as a kind of *justified, true belief* (JTB). But this idea has come under closer scrutiny in recent years, especially under the influence of Timothy Williamson's view that "knowledge" is a primitive concept, in terms of which other concepts like "justification" and "belief" are to be understood (Williamson, 2000).

In his more recent paper (2009, 312), Goldman explicitly considers Williamson's idea while considering the possibility that knowledge is a "factive mental state" (which he takes to show, erroneously) that it is "not purely internalistic." But even while Goldman considers Williamson's proposal, he is unable to free himself from the JTB frame of thinking. When he considers what an internalist might mean by "internalizing" an external fact, he proposes that the most "natural" interpretation is to read it as forming a belief about the fact (2009, 318). Presumably Goldman has to think this because if justification were itself defined in terms of knowledge, a definition of knowledge in terms of justification would be circular. Of course in a Williamsonian, "knowledge-first" framework, there would be no problem characterizing "internalizing" as a kind of knowing. An internalistic theory of justification could presuppose rather than define the concept of "knowledge."

There are further parallels we cannot discuss here between the case for the knowledge-first framework, and direct realism. Both reject the definition or explanation of a central epistemic concept (knowledge/perception) in terms of an allegedly metaphysically neutral concept (belief/appearance) and suggest that the order of definition or explanation is the reverse. Both do so after the attempt to provide such accounts were attempted by major 20th century movements in analytic philosophy.

³⁰ Note how this view of the act of justifying differs from the more conventional view as expressed, for example, in Audi (1988). Audi sees the process or act of justifying as synonymous with a social act, an act of demonstrating to an audience that one's belief has the property of justification, which he sees as expressing the fact that the belief is generated by properties or factors conducive to making it true. But on the internalist proposal I am advancing, the act of justification is primarily a personal, cognitive act, not social. Interestingly, Audi thinks that

With this in mind, we come to see the poverty of the popular conception of internalism, and the corresponding poverty it mandates for externalism. To Goldman's internalist, to have justification or knowledge is a mere fleeting event. Because it seems implausible that our knowledge would be so fleeting, the externalist opts for a picture of knowledge according to which it is an enduring property bestowed by nature or a designer in virtue of resulting from a reliable belief-forming process or the operation of a proper function, etc. This externalist view might be an improvement upon Goldman's fleeting internalistic "knowledge." But it, too, deprives the knower of *agency*, and this is probably not a coincidence. There is little room in the externalist's worldview for the concept of *knowing* or of the *knower*. There is knowledge, to be sure, but knowledge is taken as something that is bestowed, something which *happens* to a subject. The knower is not an active agent.

Recall that at the beginning of this paper, I drew a parallel between ethics (in which understanding the nature of moral justifiers helps understand bigger questions about the nature of moral justification), and epistemology. I argued that in order to understand epistemic justification, we also need to understand the nature of the justifiers, especially the nature of the objects of perceptual experience. But to understand epistemic justification, we also need an understanding of the nature of *perceivers*, and more broadly, the nature of knowers. We have now reached the point of seeing why. Both internalists and externalists need to consider seriously the prospect that knowledge is by its nature mediated over time, and that to know is an act of a knower. In direct realism, the perceiver "grasps" the world directly through a process of active interaction with the environment. And we cannot understand this act of perceiving, or knowing in general, without understanding the nature of the perceiver as a whole, as an organic being, with an enduring body and mind, not simply as a detached, contemplative, hyper-Cartesian ego.

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focusing too much on the process of justifying favors internalism, whereas focusing on the property, and its connection to truth, favors externalism. This dilemma is avoided when the act of justifying is understood as a personal cognitive act beginning with direct awareness of external objects, in the manner I have proposed. Audi argues that the dilemma arises only because "beliefs about the external world, the best candidates for [factors that generate beliefs likely to be true], e.g., production of the belief by *veridical* perception, do not seem directly accessible to awareness." I have now given an argument for why this is a mistake. Audi relates the *property* and *process* of justification as follows: "A belief is justified (has the property of justifiedness) if and only if it has one or more other, non-normative properties such that (i) in virtue of them it is justified, and (ii.) *citing* them can, at least in principle, both show that it is justified and (conceptually) *constitute* justifying it" (6).

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