

Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism

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Abstract

According to the ‘Evidential Internalists’, one’s evidence supervenes on one’s non-factive mental states. ‘Evidential Externalists’ deny that, and allow for external factors to determine what evidence one has. After clarifying what Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism entail, and what they are silent on, this chapter provides an opinionated overview of the main arguments and motivations behind Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism. It concludes that Evidential Externalism is a more promising view.

1. Introduction¹

Evidential Internalism (henceforth, Internalism) is the thesis that one’s evidence supervenes on one’s non-factive mental states (roughly put, those mental states that do not necessarily entail anything about the external environment). Evidential Externalism (henceforth, Externalism) denies Internalism and allows for external factors to determine what evidence one has.² Traditionally, epistemologists have been Internalists. For instance, empiricists of the twentieth century like Ayer and Russell embraced an account of evidence that we can call the “phenomenological conception of evidence”.³ On this view, evidence is reducible to sense data the subject can be immediately conscious of (Cf. (Russel, 1912), (Ayer, 1936)). However, the view is also widely held amongst contemporary epistemologists (Cf. (Bonjour, 1999), (Wedgwood, 2002)).⁴ Audi, for instance, writes:

¹ I am grateful to Natalie Ashton, Liz Jackson, Maria Lasonen-Aarnio, and Greta Turnbull for comments on an early draft of this paper.

² This way of framing the distinction is due to (Silins, 2005).

³ This way of labelling the view is due to Williamson, 2000.

⁴ While defending a version of Internalism, Conee and Feldman don’t explicitly restrict evidence to *non-factive* mental states (Conee & Feldman, 2004, p. 57). However, they seem to be sympathetic to something similar to Evidential Internalism.

“evidence is [. . .] ultimately internal. It centrally involves my sensory states, memory impressions, inferences, and the like.” (Audi, 2001, p. 47)

Recently, however, there has been a new trend in the literature, and Externalism has gained more popularity amongst epistemologists (See (McDowell, 1995), (Williamson, 2000) (Littlejohn, 2012), (Mitova, 2014), (Schellenberg, 2016)).

To see how Internalism differs from Externalism in some important respect, consider Gary and Barry. Gary and Barry are “internal twins”, namely, they share all non-factive mental states: they both have an experience as of two bananas in a bowl, and they both believe that there are two bananas in a bowl. However, Gary and Barry differ in some very important way:

“Although Gary is now and then mistaken about some matter of fact, Barry is a radically deceived brain in a vat, as deceived as can be given that he has the same non-factive mental states as Gary. Gary is in the good case; Barry is in the bad case.” (Silins, 2005, p. 375)

We can ask: do Gary and Barry have the same evidence? The Internalist will answer “yes”, while the Externalist will answer “no”. For while Internalists claim that whatever evidence one has is fixed by one’s non-factive mental states, according to the Externalists, instead, features of the external environment may be relevant in determining what evidence one has.

In this chapter, I overview some of the main arguments and motivations behind Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism (**Section 2** and **3** respectively). I conclude by making some general observations on the advantage Externalism enjoys (**Section 4**). However, first, I want to make some clarificatory remarks on the nature of this distinction and how it remains relatively silent on important epistemological issues.

To begin with, note that Internalism and Externalism are rather silent on what evidence *is*. Both views are compatible with psychologism, the thesis that evidence consists of mental

states, as well as with propositionalism, the view that evidence consists of propositions.⁵ Furthermore, although it might be tempting to identify Externalist propositionalism with the thesis that evidence is *factive*, namely, the thesis that evidence is constituted by only true propositions, this would be a mistake.⁶ Consider the thesis that one's evidence is all and only true propositions about how things appear to one. This is not an Externalist view because it entails that Gary and Barry have the same evidence. For, given that they share all non-factive mental states, things will appear exactly the same to both Gary and Barry. So, for instance, the proposition that there seems to be two bananas in the bowl (and all true propositions about how things seem) will be part of both Gary's and Barry's evidence. On this view, how things actually are in one's external environment won't matter for determining what evidence one has. Committing to factivity of evidence is thus not sufficient for being an Externalist. But subscribing to the idea that evidence is factive is not even necessary for being an Externalist. One can defend a theory on which one's evidence is constituted by all and only the propositions one is justified in believing, while saying that justification depends on the reliability of one's belief-forming process.⁷ On this view, Gary might have some false propositions amongst his evidence, but his total evidence would still be different from Barry's. Only Gary, in a paradigmatic good case, is justified in believing that there are two bananas in the bowl, and hence, Gary's evidence will include at least one item of evidence that Barry lacks: the proposition that there are two bananas in the bowl (Fratantonio & McGlynn, 2018, p. 84).

Furthermore, to be an Externalist, one doesn't even need to commit to the thesis that evidence entails the proposition it is evidence for. Consider Williamson's thesis on which one's evidence is all and only the propositions one knows (henceforth, E=K) (Williamson, 2000, Ch. 9). Although it is a consequence of E=K that any proposition one knows is trivially entailed by one's total evidence, it is compatible with E=K that one has evidence *e* for a proposition *p* (e.g., because *e* increases the probability of *p*) without one's total evidence entailing *p*. Nevertheless, E=K is a paradigmatic Externalist theory: it predicts that Gary and Barry have different evidence despite sharing the same non-factive mental states. For only Gary, who's in the paradigmatic good case, knows that there are two

⁵ Although psychologism is usually associated with Internalism, (Mitova, 2014) is an example of Externalism that embraces psychologism.

⁶ Note that, contrary to how the term is traditionally used, (Pritchard, 2012) talks about "factive" evidence as referring to the thesis that evidence entails the proposition it is evidence for. As I will show shortly, Evidential Externalism doesn't entail this notion of factivity either.

⁷ For a classic defence of Reliabilism see (Goldman, 1979) (Goldman, 1986).

bananas in the bowl.

The Evidential Internalism-Externalist distinction is also orthogonal to the debate concerning the nature of knowledge and epistemic justification. Both views are in principle compatible with Evidentialism about epistemic justification, i.e., the thesis that justification supervenes on evidence⁸, as well as non-evidentialist views, such as the reliabilist view discussed above.⁹ In fact, both views are silent on whether there is any evidentialist requirement on knowledge at all. Nevertheless, as Silins has pointed out, the fact that *Evidential Externalism* doesn't entail more traditional versions of externalism about epistemic justification, such as, Reliabilism, can be seen as a benefit of the view (Silins, 2005). For it avoids some of the problem Reliabilists notoriously face, such as, the Generality Problem. Roughly put, the problem of defining which type of process is the relevant type of reliable process that matters for assessing the justificatory status of a belief. For the rest of this chapter, I will thus assume Evidentialism about epistemic justification.

2. Evidential Internalism

Now that we have a better idea of what Evidential Internalism and Externalism are, what they entail, and what they are silent on, we can ask: why should we favor one account over the other? In this section, I overview the main motivations and arguments for Internalism (and against Externalism). I will consider some reasons to favor Externalism in **Section 3**.

2.1. Rationality Internalism

An important reason why epistemologists have traditionally been attracted to Evidential Internalism is that it seems to be entailed by a very intuitive picture of rationality. On this picture, rationality requires to believe in accordance to the evidence one has. Crucially, this seems possible only if evidence is “unproblematically given to the subject” (Kelly, 2008, p. 943). But if one can believe in the light of one's evidence only if evidence is the kind of thing one can have unproblematic access to, then one's evidence cannot depend on circumstances “beyond our ken” (Cohen, 1984, p. 282): Evidential Internalism must be true.

⁸ The *locus classicus* for Evidentialism is (Conee & Feldman, 2004).

⁹ See (Littlejohn, 2018) for a view that rejects Evidentialism about justification while endorsing E=K.

One way to respond for the Externalist would be to bite the bullet here and say that, contrary to appearances, we often don't know what our evidence is and what rationality requires (Williamson, 2000, p. 179-81). Alternatively, she could revise the relation between evidence and rationality in a way that explains how being rational is compatible with failing to know what evidence one has (e.g., because of some non-culpable mistake). For example, the externalist might say that one can be fully rational in believing that *p* iff one shouldn't have expected to have any undefeated evidence against believing that *p* (Littlejohn, 2011, p. 496). On this view, rationality has to do with doing the best one can, which requires believing accordingly to what one *takes* one's evidence to be.

A discussion of what rationality requires would lead us too far afield. However, for the purpose of this chapter, it's enough to conclude this brief section by saying that a leading line of reasoning behind Evidential Internalism, one that underpins the main arguments for Internalism that I will address in the next sections, runs schematically as follows: rationality requires believing in accordance to one's evidence; one can believe in accordance to one's evidence only if one can have unproblematic access to it. Crucially, if Evidential Externalism is true, then one cannot have unproblematic access to one's evidence. Therefore, Evidential Internalism must be true.

2.2. The New Evil Demon Problem

A core argument for Internalism is the New Evil Demon Problem (NED).¹⁰ Consider again Gary (in the good case) and his internal twin Barry (in the bad case). As seen in the previous section, Internalism predicts that Gary and Barry have the same evidence. That is, Internalism entails the following thesis:

SAMENESS of EVIDENCE: if A and B are internal twins, then they have the same evidence.

However, if Externalism is true, then Gary and Barry have different evidence. Further, assume an evidentialist theory of justification on which the justification one has is a

¹⁰ (Lehrer & Cohen, 1983) and (Cohen, 1984) originally raised this argument against Reliabilism about epistemic justification.

function of one's evidence. Then, it seems to follow that Garry and Barry aren't equally justified in believing that there is a banana in the bowl. Crucially, this clashes with the intuition that Gary and Barry are equally justified in believing as they do. Call this the Equal Justification Thesis. If we take Equal Justification at face value, then the Internalist is right: evidence supervenes on one's non-factive mental states. For if Gary and Barry have the same evidence, then their evidence has to be fixed by something they share, and it seems that the only things Gary and Barry share are their non-factive mental states.

The classic externalist response here is to appeal to the "excuse-manoeuvre". On this line of response, the Externalist will be happy to say that Barry is *blameless* in believing as he does and to grant him an *excuse*, while insisting that Barry and Gary have nevertheless different evidence and justification (Cf. (Littlejohn, forthcoming), (Williamson, forthcoming), (Pritchard, 2012, pp. 42-43)). By doing so, the Externalist can explain why we tend to sympathise with Barry despite being systematically deceived, and she can do so without having to embrace Evidential Internalism.

Two main worries have been raised for the excuse-manoeuvre. First, as (Gerken, 2011) has argued, in order to avoid the charge of *ad hocery*, those who appeal to the excuse-manoeuvre must provide an account of when exactly one deserves the status of blamelessly or excusably believing something.¹¹ One way to explain this is, following Williamson, to appeal to some form of normative pluralism. Williamson has argued that justification is a matter of believing in accordance with the primary knowledge norm of belief, on which you should believe that *p* only if you know that *p*. On the other hand, according to his view, someone like Barry might nevertheless be complying with some derivative secondary norm, and that's enough for deserving an excuse (Williamson, forthcoming). But even if the externalist can explain when exactly one deserves an excuse, one might worry that granting Barry an *excuse* for (wrongly) believing as he does, doesn't seem to be enough. For Barry seems more than merely excusable. Intuitively, he's doing *epistemically* well (Cf. (Simion, et al., 2016)). However, it still seems possible to vindicate this intuition within an Externalist framework. For instance, according to Lasonen-Aarnio, Barry is more than merely excusable: in believing that there are two bananas in the bowl he is manifesting a good epistemic disposition, one that, in relevant counterfactual cases would be conducive

¹¹ Note that Gerken raises this objection to the excuse-manoeuvre as originally made in the context of the knowledge norm of action. Cf. (Williamson, 2000, p. Ch. 5), (Hawthorne & Stanley, 2008). See (Brown, 2018, p. Ch. 4) for recent argument against this knowledge-based account of justification and the excuse maneuver.

to epistemic successes, e.g., true belief, belief that is proportionated to the evidence, and knowledge (Lasonen-Aarnio, forthcoming-b).^{12 13}

A lot has been written on the NED problem.¹⁴ For our purposes, the following remark about the dialectic is enough. I believe the Internalist is right in saying that there is a sense in which Barry is doing well *epistemically*. However, while the Internalist takes Equal Justification as a datum that a theory of evidence should accommodate, I suspect the Externalist will have a few qualms about accepting the claim that Barry is doing *just as epistemically well as Gary*. For if in the overall epistemic evaluation of Barry and Gary we consider how much evidence and justification they have, then, the Externalist will insist, Gary is overall epistemically better off than Barry.

2.3. The Distinguishability Problem

The next argument for Sameness of Evidence I consider is what I call, borrowing Pritchard's terminology (2012, pp. 91-100), the Distinguishability Problem. Similarly to the NED, the Distinguishability Problem considers a subject in a paradigmatic good case and her radically deceived internal twin, such as Gary and Barry.¹⁵ However, contrary to the NED, the Distinguishability Problem does not question whether and how the Externalist can explain the intuition that Barry is just as equally justified as Gary. Instead, it puts pressure on the following fact: Externalism entails that one's evidence differs depending on whether one is in the good or in the bad case. But then, assuming that one can know what evidence one has and what evidence one would have were one in the good or bad case, one can figure out whether one is in the good or in the bad case. Although the Externalist might be happy to say that in the good case one can know that one is in the good case (and not in the bad case)¹⁶, she probably wouldn't welcome the conclusion that one can figure out in the bad case that one is in the bad case (and not in the good case). After all, "part of the badness of the bad case is that one cannot know how bad one's case is" (Williamson, 2000, p. 171). This argument allegedly represents a *reductio ad absurdum* of Externalism: Gary in the good case and Barry in the bad case must have the same evidence.

¹² See also (Lasonen-Aarnio, forthcoming-a).

¹³ There's also a straightforward way in which the Externalist can grant Barry a positive epistemic standing: she can say that Barry has *some* evidence, e.g., evidence about how things look like.

¹⁴ See (Littlejohn, 2009) for a useful overview.

¹⁵ Note that Pritchard's Distinguishability Problem concerns a case of *local* skepticism.

¹⁶ As I will discuss in **Section 3.1**, this is a promising implication of Externalism.

The most traditional Externalist response to this argument is to reject its main assumption. In his *Knowledge and Its Limits*, Williamson has notoriously argued that having a proposition p as part of one's evidence is not a *luminous* condition. That is, whatever evidence one has, one isn't always in the position to know what evidence one has (Williamson, 2000, p. 951).¹⁷ Whether there are good reasons to embrace something in the neighbourhood of a *luminosity* claim is something I will go back to in **Section 2.4**. For now, however, it's enough to notice that, as things stand, the Distinguishability Problem seems to rest on a false premise.

2.4 The Armchair Access Problem

The last argument against Externalism I consider is Silins' "Armchair Access Problem" (Silins, 2005, pp. 379-84). Contrary to the previous arguments, this Access Problem isn't centred on the Sameness of Evidence thesis. Instead, it aims to show that Externalism is in tension with the following plausible thesis about what we can know "from the armchair":

Armchair Access: it is sometimes the case that: one's evidence includes a proposition e and one knows from the armchair alone that one's evidence includes e . (Silins, 2005, p. 381)

To understand this problem, the following two points are worth making. First, on the most charitable interpretation of Silins' words, *armchair knowledge* of a proposition is compatible with having had *enabling* experiences, namely, experiences necessary to understand the concepts involved in the target proposition in the first place (2005, pp. 380-81). Second, note that Armchair Access is meant to be a weak claim, one that is compatible with Williamson's anti-luminosity argument and something externalists should thus be willing to embrace.

Crucially, Silins argues, when we combine Externalism with Armchair Access, we reach the absurd conclusion that one can know from the armchair contingent propositions about the external environment. Consider again $E=K$. Take e to be any contingent proposition

¹⁷ For criticisms of Williamson's argument see (Steup, 2009) and Williamson's reply in (Williamson, 2009). See also Amia Srinivasan for a further defense of anti-luminosity (Srinivasan, 2015)

about the external environment. Assuming $E=K$ and the factivity of knowledge, if e is part of my evidence, then e is true. But if I can have armchair knowledge that my evidence includes e (Armchair Access), then, assuming further that I can know that $E=K$ is true from the armchair, it follows that I can know from the armchair alone that e is true. But this seems absurd: contingent propositions about the environment are the kinds of things we cannot know from the armchair alone!¹⁸

One option for the Externalist would be to reject Armchair Access altogether. After all, the externalist might say, what motivates Armchair Access is a highly internalistic conception of rationality, and yet, as we have seen in Section 2.1., this is not uncontroversial (Cf. (Littlejohn, 2011, p. 490)). However, I'm not sure this move will help the externalist to resist the Access Problem. For all the Access Problem needs to get going is only that we are *sometimes* in a position to know from the armchair what our evidence is. This seems plausible regardless of what we think rationality requires. How can the externalist accept that it is indeed sometimes possible to know our evidence from the armchair while resisting the seemingly absurd conclusion that we can know things from the armchair about the external environment?

I believe there are two compatible and mutually supportive strategies the externalist can embrace (Fratantonio, 2018). On the one hand, the externalist can put pressure on the *scope* of Armchair Access, by arguing that Armchair Access is indeed plausible only when restricted to non-environmentally sensitive propositions (e.g., logical and mathematical truths). The externalist will thus reject a crucial premise of Silins' argument: we cannot have armchair knowledge that our evidence includes e (where e is a contingent proposition about the external environment). Although Silins, who anticipates this move, takes this restriction to be ad hoc, it's not clear to me why so. The reason why Armchair Access looks so plausible is that it merely states that we *sometimes* have armchair knowledge of what our evidence is. Given the notion of armchair knowledge Silins has in mind, it is unclear why it would be ad hoc to say that we can have armchair knowledge of *some* (but not all) of our (propositional) evidence ((Fratantonio & McGlynn, 2018, pp. 86-7), (Fratantonio, 2018, pp. 532-34)). On the other hand, the externalist can put pressure on the *nature* of armchair knowledge underpinning Armchair Access. For the conclusion that we can have armchair knowledge of propositions about the external environment sounds

¹⁸ This argument mirrors the more notorious McKinsey-paradox (McKinsey, 1991).

absurd only insofar we are assuming that “armchair knowledge” is knowledge based on merely *enabling* experience. However, there are good reasons to think that experience is not merely playing an enabling role in these cases of “armchair knowledge” of our evidence *e*, in which *e* is a contingent proposition about the environment. More precisely, as I have argued in (Fratantonio, 2018), these cases of armchair knowledge often seem to require one to conduct an inquiry on one’s epistemic status, where this inquiry involves the employment of imaginative capacities that highly resemble the ones we apply when evaluating counterfactuals and when assessing error-possibilities. Crucially, if Williamson is right in saying that our imaginative capacities rest on experience that plays a role that is more than merely enabling and less than strictly evidential (Williamson, 2013), then it’s plausible to think that experience plays this *quasi-evidential* role in cases in which we come to know “from the armchair” that *e* is part of our evidence (where *e* is a contingent proposition about the environment). If this is correct, then the fact that we can have “armchair knowledge” of our evidence *e* doesn’t sound so absurd anymore, even when *e* is a contingent proposition about the external environment.¹⁹

3. Evidential Externalism

In the previous section, I considered some of the most prominent arguments for Internalism. Crucially, none of them seem to provide us with strong motivations for restricting evidence to **non-factive mental states**. The remainder of the chapter considers some motivations behind Externalism.

3.1. Radical Scepticism

A first reason why Internalism looks troublesome is that it seems to play a crucial role in a form of sceptical argument.

Let’s consider again Gary, in a paradigmatic good case, and his recently envatted internal twin Barry. If Internalism is true, then, given Gary and Barry have the same non-factive mental states, they also have the same evidence. But, if they have the same evidence, and Barry doesn’t have any knowledge of how things are in the external environment, then

¹⁹ Note that this strategy might not be available to Externalist views that embrace a strong accessibility requirement. For instance, see (Fratantonio, forthcoming) for arguments showing that the Access Problem represents a real threat to Pritchard’s externalist “Epistemological Disjunctivism” (Pritchard, 2012).

how can Gary have knowledge on the basis of such impoverished evidence? The internalist will say that, given in Garry's scenario the truth condition is also met, there's a trivial and straightforward reason why Garry (but not Barry) knows, for instance, that he has hands. Furthermore, the internalist might say that Garry's evidence, such as, his seeming that he has hands, confers Garry (defeasible) justification for believing that he has hands.²⁰ Crucially, things are not as easy for the internalist as they might look like. For instance, according to White, it's plausible to say that if my evidence supports a proposition *p* and I thereby gain justification for *p*, then I should also raise my confidence in the truth of *p*. And yet, White argues, "when it appears to me that something is a hand, my confidence that it is not a fake-hand should *decrease*. For since this is just what a fake-hand would look like, the degree to which I suspect it *is* a fake hand should *increase*" (White, 2006, p. 531). On the one hand, Internalism restricts evidence to facts concerning one's non-factive mental states, e.g., one's sensory experiences. On the other hand, the sceptical hypothesis that [one is a handless brain in a vat fed perfectly veridical experiences as of having hands] entails that in the bad case one has the exact same sensory experiences one would have in the good case. So, unless one has antecedent and independent justification for believing that one is not a brain in a vat, then, if Internalism is true, one's evidence in the good case doesn't seem adequate to confer justification or knowledge.

A promising internalist rejoinder is the so-called Explanationist response (Cf. (Vogel, 1990), (Conee & Feldman, 2008), (McCain, 2014)). The Explanationist will grant that Gary's sense experiences *by themselves* are inadequate to underwrite justification (or knowledge). After all, the sceptical hypothesis entails that Gary has the sensory experiences that he has. However, the hypothesis that Gary in fact has hands *best* explains his evidence, namely, why he has the experience as of having two hands. More precisely, according to the Explanationist, our common sense judgment about the existence of the world best explains the coherence, regularity, and continuity of our sense experiences, and this inference to the best explanation is enough to underwrite our justification for believing that there is an external world and that the sceptical hypothesis is false.

Appealing to inference to the best explanation (IBE) in the context of scepticism has raised some worries. A first worry concerns the justificatory status of IBE itself. For instance,

²⁰ Something along these lines is notoriously embraced by so-called dogmatists and phenomenal conservatists, e.g., (Pryor, 2000) (Huemer, 2001).

(Fumerton, 1992) has argued that the Explanationist assumes that our sensory experiences can be explained by a cause. Crucially, this presumption is unjustified for it needs “a prior solution to scepticism about the physical world and we will be precluded from using [IBE] in order to get that solution.” (1992, p. 163).²¹ However, even if we put aside concerns about the justificatory status of IBE, the Explanationist response might still encounter problems. Susanna Rinard, for instance, has recently argued that our common sense beliefs might actually not be the *best* explanation of the continuity of our sensory experience (Rinard, 2018). For example, an idealist theory could offer a simpler explanation of our sensory experiences given that it postulates less entities. But even if we grant that our common sense beliefs best explain the continuity of our sensory experience, appealing to IBE doesn’t seem to be enough to provide us with justification for believing the falsity of the sceptical hypothesis. Roughly put, Rinard’s argument hinges on the idea that if, given what one knows, there are more ways in which p can be true than not-p, then one has more justification to believe p than not-p.²² If this is right, then, given that one knows that there are more ways in which our experience can be non-veridical than veridical (just think of the varieties of sceptical hypothesis that have been developed in the literature!), it seems that one is more justified in believing the sceptical hypothesis than the hypothesis that one’s experience is veridical.

Whether these considerations are sufficient for rejecting the Explanationist response or not, the moral of the story is that the Internalist surely has a lot of work to do to resist this sceptical challenge. By contrast, the Externalist seems to be immediately better positioned, for she can easily say that Gary has *better* or *more* evidence than Barry. For instance, E=K predicts that given that Gary (but not Barry) knows that he has hands, his evidence entails that the sceptical hypothesis is false.

Interestingly, Silins has recently questioned this advantage that Externalism seems to have. By focusing on Barry in the *bad case*, Silins plausibly points out that most epistemologists – externalists included – would deny that Barry is justified in believing that he’s in the bad case (as **Section 2.3** shows).²³ Furthermore, Silins claims, the Externalist will also deny

²¹ See (McCain, 2017) for a response.

²² This is a simplification of Rinard’s own principle. Furthermore, note that Rinard formulates this principle in terms of the degree of credence one should have (Rinard, 2018, pp. 208-14). However, assuming our degree of confidence should match our degree of justification, this justification-based principle is also plausible.

²³ (Magidor, 2018) is an exception.

that Barry is justified in believing that he's not in the bad case (as discussed in **Section 2.2**). However, it's plausible that if one lacks justification for believing that *p*, and one lacks justification for believing that not-*p*, then one has justification for suspending judgment on whether *p* is the case. If this principle is true, then the Externalist has to say that Barry in the bad case is justified in suspending judgment on whether he's a brain in a vat or not. Crucially, Silins argues, this is highly implausible:

“Suppose that Barry did suspend the judgment in the proposition that [*p*], despite the fact that there seems to be that [*p*], and despite the fact that no defeating evidence is available to him. I take it to be very implausible that Barry would be justified in suspending judgment in the matter.” (Silins, 2005, p. 392)

I don't think this constitutes a real threat to the Externalist. In particular, the Externalist can account for the intuition that it would indeed be weird if Barry *did* in fact suspend judgment on whether *p* is the case: given what Barry *wrongly* takes his evidence to be, we would expect him to believe that he's not a brain in a vat. While appealing to something similar to the 'excuse-manoeuvre' discussed in **Section 2.2**, the Externalist will however insist that we shouldn't conflate claims about what's *reasonable* for Barry to believe given his limited knowledge about his own epistemic situation, with claims about what he has *justification* to believe (Fratantonio and McGlynn, 2018, pp. 99-100).

3.2 Publicity of Evidence

Another reason one might think Externalism is a promising view is that, contrary to Internalism, it can account for the intuition that evidence is supposed to be a *neutral arbiter*, i.e., a public item everyone can appeal to. By taking one's evidence to supervene on one's non-factive mental states, Internalism doesn't seem to capture this “publicity of evidence” intuition (Kelly, 2008, p. 949).

Perhaps the Internalist can appeal to some form of pluralism about evidence. (Conee & Feldman, 2008), for instance, distinguish between *scientific* evidence, evidence that is publicly available and a reliable indicator of some state of affairs, and *justifying* evidence, evidence that confers one with epistemic justification. On this pluralist account, although scientific evidence can be useful for acquiring justifying evidence, the two notions are

distinct. For example, one can have scientific evidence for p without grasping the connection between such evidence and p , thereby failing to have justifying evidence (2008, pp. 84–86). Conee and Feldman can thus vindicate this “publicity of evidence” intuition within the scientific and legal context, while insisting that *justifying* evidence (evidence we consider when evaluating people’s beliefs) is a matter of having something one can cite as basis for believing something, and this supposedly leads towards a picture of (justifying) evidence that is restricted to the content of one’s mind.

But one might ask: why should we opt for pluralism when, by allowing evidence to extend beyond the mind, Externalism can offer a unified account of *justifying* and *scientific* evidence? Crucially, things might not be so easy for some paradigmatic Externalist views, e.g., $E=K$. For if the Internalist has to motivate why we should restrict evidence to non-factive mental states, likewise the Externalist has to explain the plausibility of restricting evidence to *known* propositions only. Joyce, for instance, has argued that requiring all evidence to be knowledge sets the bar too high, for it clashes with our understanding of evidence as something that is context-sensitive and that comes in degrees (Joyce, 2004, pp. 297–98). And even if we adopt a more liberal externalist view, one that restricts evidence to true propositions only, externalism still seems at odds with our common sense usage of ‘evidence’ as what we appeal to in order to *make sense* of someone’s beliefs and actions. To put it in Joyce’s words:

“Often when we speak of a person’s evidence [w]e try to give a *rationalising explanation* (or critique) of some things she believes, usually by citing other things she believes. Here the standard of truth is inappropriate”. (Joyce, 2004, p. 296)

The externalist could object that providing a rationalising explanation of a person’s beliefs merely requires accounting for what she (sometimes mistakenly) *takes* her evidence to be, but Joyce thinks this response is problematic. Imagine a juror who reaches the verdict that the defendant is innocent on the basis of false testimony that the defendant was asleep at the time of the murder. If Externalism is true, then we will speak falsely when saying – as we ordinarily do – that the juror had evidence for her verdict, thereby committing to an error-theory of the rational explanations we would ordinarily offer of the juror’s verdict. According to Joyce, rather than saying that the juror is mistaken about the evidence she has, we should say that the juror has been provided with *misleading* or *false* evidence (2004,

p. 302). However, it's not clear that the Externalist is committed to an error-theory here. The Externalist can say that the juror had misleading (yet not false) evidence for her verdict, namely, that the testifier *said* that the defendant was asleep (McGlynn, 2014, p. 74).²⁴ Furthermore, while Joyce's objections target some radical Externalist view, it's not clear whether they would apply to all versions of Externalism. After all, as seen in **Section 1**, some versions of Externalism might even allow for one's total evidence to contain some falsehoods.

Ultimately, I believe that arguing that Externalism is problematic because it doesn't vindicate our intuitions about the notion of evidence is not a very promising strategy. If anything, Turri's recent empirical studies suggest the opposite: the empirical data he's recently presented indicates that our common sense usage of 'evidence' is largely truth-sensitive. Interestingly, experiments asking the research participants to assess the *justificatory* status of someone's belief have delivered similar results (Turri, 2018). That is, both our folk conception of evidence and our ordinary way of evaluating beliefs seems to be largely truth-sensitive, thereby questioning the plausibility of Conee and Feldman's distinction between *scientific* and *justificatory* evidence.²⁵

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the debate between Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism. Note that this does not represent an exhaustive list of arguments against/for each view²⁶. The aim of this Chapter was more modest, namely, to provide an overview of some of the main arguments that help to shed light on the motivations underlying these views.

Let me thus conclude by clarifying what these motivations are. On the one hand, what's driving most internalist arguments is the idea that evidence has to be the kind of thing we can have unproblematic access to. This, in turn, seems to be motivated by the following two claims: i) rationality requires one to respect one's evidence; ii) respecting one's evidence is possible only if one has access to it. On the other hand, by allowing

²⁴ Cf. (Leite, 2013).

²⁵ See also (Littlejohn, 2011) for linguistic evidence for Externalism.

²⁶ For another relevant argument for Externalism see (Littlejohn, 2012, pp. 91-92). For another interesting argument against Externalism see Silins 2005. See Fratantonio and McGlynn 2018 for a response.

evidence to extend beyond the mind, Externalism vindicates our folk notion of evidence, one on which evidence is a public item that can be shared by many, and the neutral arbiter that reliably indicates the truth of some proposition. However, while it seems that Externalism can somehow accommodate some of the above-mentioned Internalist intuitions, it's difficult to see how Internalism can make sense of the 'publicity of evidence' while insisting that one's evidence supervenes on one's non-factive mental states. Furthermore, while Internalism threatens to lead to scepticism, the Externalist has a straightforward solution to the sceptical problem: by rejecting Sameness of Evidence, she can easily say that one has better or more evidence in the good case than one's internal twin in the bad case. At least for these reasons, I believe Externalism is a better option.

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