A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ALVIN PLANTINGA ON JUSTIFICATION AND WARRANT

By

Mark Capustin

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Philosophy
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ALVIN PLANTINGA ON JUSTIFICATION AND WARRANT

BY

MARK CAPUSTIN

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I argue that even if Alvin Plantinga's externalist theory of warrant is essentially correct, internalism with respect to epistemic justification should not be abandoned. I argue that internalist justification, understood in purely evidentialist terms, is both necessary for warrant, and desirable for the pragmatic benefits that it affords.

Plantinga defines warrant as the quality or quantity, enough of which is both necessary and sufficient for turning true belief into knowledge. His theory states that a belief is warranted if it is produced by a reliable, truth-directed cognitive faculty functioning properly in an appropriate epistemic environment. In principle, it is not possible for a cognizer to know whether or not a given belief has warrant, since many of the relevant facts regarding the functioning of one's faculties and the congeniality of the epistemic environment are not the kinds of facts to which the cognizer has direct epistemic access.

Internalist theories of epistemic justification hold that the factors that confer epistemic justification are internal to the mind, and at least potentially accessible to the cognizer upon reflection or introspection. I argue that a belief is justified if and only if it fits one's evidence. I also argue that it is plausible to conclude that beliefs that fail to be justified also lack warrant. If this is correct, then internalist justification, understood in evidentialist terms, affords the pragmatic benefit of providing an accessible criterion for assessing the epistemic status of a significant class of beliefs with respect to their warrant.

Introduction

The landscape of contemporary epistemology has been shaped to a significant extent by Edmund Gettier's three page paper, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?".[1] Prior to Gettier, there was a storied tradition that could be ultimately traced back to Plato's *Theateteus*, according to which knowledge is defined as "justified true belief"[2]. However, the Gettier problems wreak havoc with this received tradition. In one of Gettier's examples, Smith is justified in believing that Jones owns a Ford, because Jones provides Smith with good reason to believe that he own a Ford, and Jones has no reason to doubt Smith's integrity. For no good reason – he does not know where Brown is – Smith also forms the belief that Brown is in Barcelona. Smith sees the entailment and correctly infers, among other propositions, that "Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona". As it turns out, Jones does not own a Ford (he was deceiving Smith), but by a happy coincidence, Brown is in Barcelona. Thus Smith is justified in believing the true proposition "Either Jones owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona", but it is quite clear that he does not know that the proposition is true. By demonstrating that it is possible for a belief to be both true and justified while failing to constitute knowledge, Gettier has enormously influenced the course of epistemological discussions.

One difficulty that is faced upon entering into epistemological discussions is that in order to proceed fruitfully, one must have or develop a working understanding of 'justification' and all that it entails. The reason that this is a problem is because justification is variously characterizable. It is possible to use the term in a rather generic

---

[1] Edmund Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge" *Analysis* 23 (1963) 121 - 123

[2] Plato. *Theateteus*, (tr. Benjamin Jowett) (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing) 1949.

fashion, as denoting the quality that separates knowledge from merely true belief, whatever this quality may be. In his work in epistemology, Alvin Plantinga prefers the term 'warrant' for this generic usage. According to Plantinga, justification is not suitable for this generic usage because it is a loaded term: ""Justification' suggests duty, obligation, requirement; it is redolent of permission and rights; it brings to mind exoneration, not being properly subject to blame – it connotes, in a word (or two) the whole deontological stable".[3] 'Warrant', while perhaps not completely free of its own misleading connotations (it too may carry connotations of deontology), is seen by Plantinga as better suited for denoting the quality that 'epistemizes' belief; that which distinguishes knowledge from true belief. This epistemizing quality is, according to Plantinga, not identical with justification as it has traditionally been understood.

Plantinga suggests that: "justification, internalism, and deontology are properly seen as a closely related triumvirate: internalism flows from deontology and is unmotivated without it, and justification is at bottom and originally a deontological notion".[4] While some may disagree with this assessment[5], an understanding of why Plantinga characterizes justification in this manner is indispensable for understanding both his account of warrant and of justification. Thus, in chapter 1, which will aim solely at clear exposition of Plantinga's position, I will begin by briefly examining Plantinga's reasons for characterizing justification in the manner that he does: as being closely related to internalism, deontology and evidentialism. Much of the work will consist in defining and sorting out the respective roles of the various concepts.

---

[3] Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) 4.
[4] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*. 29
[5] See Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "Internalism Defended," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 38 (2001) 1-18

I will then discuss Plantinga's case for concluding that justification, as he understands it, is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant. This will be accomplished by outlining his main arguments against the necessity of internalist justification, conceived of in its two main forms – deontological justification and evidential justification. Regarding the necessity and sufficiency of internalist justification, I will pay closer attention to the arguments that Plantinga uses to demonstrate that justification is not necessary for warrant. The claim that internalist justification is not necessary for warrant is the more controversial claim, given that Gettier problems point to the insufficiency of internalist justification.

My attention will then turn to Plantinga's account of warrant. Plantinga judges that internalist theories of justification not only fall short of providing an adequate account of warrant; he thinks that they are completely mistaken. He thus concludes that one must turn to externalism. I shall explain Plantinga's theory of warrant by outlining its key components, and elucidating why Plantinga believes that his theory succeeds where internalist theories of justification fail, and where other externalist theories fall short.

Once I have outlined the main features of Plantinga's position, I shall undertake a critical evaluation of his arguments in the second chapter. I first follow Richard Feldman in arguing that Plantinga mistakenly assumes that contemporary internalists take justification to be necessary and nearly sufficient for warrant. Plantinga assumes that internalists aim to give an account of warrant in internalist terms; that they think the basic shape of warrant is given in terms of internalist justification, with only a "quasi-technical fillip or addendum" needed mollify Gettier.[6] But Feldman argues that internalists generally recognize that internalist theories cannot provide an account of the basic shape

[6] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 6

of warrant; rather, they can only provide an account of the basic shape of justification. I agree with Feldman that Gettier problems show that internalist justification is nowhere near sufficient for warrant, so internalist theories of justification cannot become theories of warrant with the addition of only a minor fillip or addendum.

While internalists generally recognize that internalist justification is not sufficient for warrant, they do think that it is necessary. I thus move to a discussion of whether justification is necessary for warrant. I treat 'deontological justification' and 'evidential justification' separately, and conclude that deontology is entirely on the wrong track in providing a suitable account of justification. I argue that evidentialism is correct in its characterization of what justification requires, and that evidential justification is necessary for warrant, and thus for knowledge. I conclude that Plantinga's theory of warrant, which I take to be essentially correct, should incorporate evidential justification as a condition of warrant. I argue that a well-formed noetic structure will be one in which all beliefs are evidentially justified – where beliefs are such that there is evidence in their favour, and they fit the available evidence. The key to this idea is that to be evidentially justified, a belief only needs to fit the evidence; it does not need to be formed on the basis of evidence. I point out what I take to be an important distinction between belief production and belief maintenance. I take Plantinga's theory of warrant to be a theory of belief production. Justification, on the other hand, lends insight into belief maintenance, and as such, it affords us pragmatic benefits that Plantinga's theory of warrant does not.

Chapter 1

A central aim of Plantinga's epistemological project is to demonstrate that the received 'justified true belief' tradition not only fails to provide a sufficient analysis of knowledge, but that it is completely on the wrong track. According to Plantinga, knowledge is not a matter of one's being justified in believing a true proposition; rather, he argues that knowledge is a matter of having a 'warranted' true belief, and he thinks that there is an unbridgeable gulf between his account of warrant and the justified true belief tradition. Thus, the first task will be to explain what Plantinga takes the justified true belief tradition to be asserting, and come to an understanding of why he thinks this tradition fails to provide a correct account of knowledge. Secondly, I will outline his account of warrant, explaining its central features and discussing why Plantinga includes these features. An assessment of whether or not Plantinga is correct in his judgment that the received tradition fails, along with an evaluation of whether or not his theory of warrant succeeds where others fail shall be the task of the following chapter. A clear exposition of Plantinga's position shall be the aim of this chapter.

I. Plantinga on Justification: the "Received Tradition"

Upon reading chapter one of *Warrant: The Current Debate*, one is quickly made aware of the difficulties involved in formulating a concise definition of justification. In just over three pages, Plantinga cites more than half a dozen attempts by various philosophers to define justification, each differing in some respect from the other proposed definitions. Immediately following the presentation of this array of approaches to justification,

Plantinga asks a most appropriate question: "Now: how shall we understand this blooming, buzzing confusion with respect to justification?"[7]

Rather than attempting to throw his own definition into the mix, Plantinga instead attempts to outline the basic structure of justification as it is generally understood in the "received tradition" by getting to the root of the intuitions that underlie thinking about justification. Plantinga argues that: "justification, internalism, and deontology are properly seen as a closely related triumvirate".[8] In addition, Plantinga sees the importance of evidence as being embedded in the traditional notion of justification: "Indeed, the traditional 'justified true belief' analysis of knowledge has often been stated with '*S* has *adequate evidence for p*' replacing '*S* is justified in believing *p*'."[9] In what follows, I shall attempt to outline what Plantinga takes to be the basic shape of justification by examining each of the key components involved.

A. Deontology

According to Plantinga, justification is most properly thought of in deontological terms, since justification is originally a term related to concepts of duty and permission.[10] Broadly characterized, deontology with respect to epistemic justification is the view that justification consists in fulfilment of one's intellectual duties and obligations, blameless belief, and praiseworthy belief formation:

> To act in accord with these duties or obligations is to be within one's rights; it is to do only what is permissible; it is to be subject to no blame or disapprobation; it is to have flouted no duties; it is, in a word, to be justified.[11]

---

[7] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 10
[8] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 29
[9] Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 186
[10] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 14
[11] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 14

Plantinga explicates epistemic deontology by tracing it back to what he cites as its roots in the thought of Descartes and Locke, especially Locke. If we assume that Descartes accepts that we have a duty to act rightly, then according to Descartes, we have a duty to withhold affirmation from propositions that are not sufficiently clear and distinct: "If I abstain from judging of a thing when I do not perceive it with sufficient clearness and distinctness, it is plain that I act rightly".[12] Deontology is more clearly evident in the following passage from Locke, where he comments on those who fail to carry out their epistemic duty, and contrasts them with those who do fulfil their duty:

> This at least is certain, that he must be accountable for whatever mistakes he runs into: whereas he that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth, by those helps and abilities he has, may have that satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature.... For he governs his assent right, and places it as he should.[13]

According to Locke, it may not be possible to bring it about that all of our beliefs are true; but we can, if we observe our duty, have the satisfaction of knowing that all of our beliefs are justified.

Some philosophers have rejected epistemic deontology on the basis that it assumes doxastic voluntarism – the view that we can directly control whether or not we believe a proposition. It does seem that Locke's view assumes some degree of doxastic voluntarism, since he talks about "governing our assent and placing it as we should". Objectors argue that it is implausible to think that we can directly control what we

---

[12] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (tr. John Veitch) in *The Rationalists*. (New York: Doubleday, 1960) 150

[13] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Dover, 1959) 413-414

believe, and they argue that this implausibility provides sufficient grounds for rejecting deontology.[14]

Plantinga agrees that doxastic voluntarism is implausible if it is understood in the sense of our having direct control over whether or not we believe a proposition. But Plantinga does not think that deontologism entails doxastic voluntarism in this strong sense (although some deontologists may adopt doxastic voluntarism in the strong sense). Instead, he thinks that deontology entails doxastic voluntarism in a weak sense that requires only that we have indirect control over our beliefs:

> [P]erhaps epistemic deontologism implies a doxastic voluntarism of some sort, a sort of weak doxastic voluntarism; but it does not as such imply that there are any beliefs at all such that merely by an act of will I can either acquire or lose or withhold them.... Perhaps instead my duty is to follow Lock's advice and reflect on the question whether the belief in question is supported by my evidence; perhaps it is my duty to adopt or strive to adopt policies of a certain sort. It is within my power to adopt policies that influence and modify my propensities to believe...[15]

So Plantinga does not think that epistemic deontology stands or falls with strong doxastic voluntarism. Epistemic duties can be construed in a way such that they require us to undertake actions that can plausibly be thought of as being within our capabilities to perform.

Epistemic deontology, as described above, is what Plantinga sees as the source of internalism:

> This thought – the thought that being justified in holding a belief is having fulfilled one's epistemic duties in forming or continuing to hold that belief – is the *fons et origo* of the whole internalist tradition. It is this notion of deontological justification that is the source of internalism: deontology implies internalism.[16]

---

[14] For a well developed version of this criticism, see William Alston, "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification" *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988): 257-299

[15] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 24

[16] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 14-15

Given this close relationship that Plantinga sees between epistemic deontology and internalism, it will now be fitting to proceed to a discussion of internalism and its relation to deontology.

B. Internalism

Internalism is a view about what kind of relation a subject has to the factors that can justify her beliefs. According to an internalist view of epistemic justification, justification is a matter of possessing the appropriate mental states: states to which the cognizer can have immediate access or can be aware of upon reflection. Lawrence BonJour points out that this element of cognitive accessibility is commonly accepted as the distinguishing feature of internalism:

> The most generally accepted account...is that a theory of justification is *internalist* if and only if it requires that all of the factors needed for a belief to be epistemically justified for a given person be *cognitively accessible* to that person, internal to his cognitive perspective;[17]

This accessibility is achievable via introspection or reflection, as Robert Audi explains:

> Some examples suggest that justification is grounded entirely in what is internal to the mind, in a sense implying that it is accessible to introspection or reflection by the subject – a view we might call internalism about justification.[18]

Plantinga agrees with BonJour and Audi when he writes that:

> The basic thrust of internalism in epistemology, therefore, is that the properties that confer warrant upon a belief are properties to which the believer has some special sort of epistemic access.[19]

---

[17] Lawrence BonJour, "Externalism/Internalism" in *A Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Jonathan Dancy and Enest Sosa (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) 132

[18] Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Rouutledge, 1998) 233-234.

[19] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 6

The basic idea that is encapsulated in all of the above observations is that, if a view is internalist, factors and considerations that can be cited as potentially justifying a belief will be taken to be such that they are, or at least can be, within the scope of one's cognitive awareness. This is clearly the understanding of internalism endorsed by Plantinga. He seems somewhat noncommittal on the issue of whether internalism requires that a belief be justified only if a person actually *is* aware of the factors that confer justification, or whether internalist justification requires only that a person *can be* aware of these factors. However, given that he sees the basic thrust of internalism as involving an *accessibility* requirement (as opposed to an *awareness* requirement), one may infer that he commits himself only to discussing the weaker version of internalism, according to which it is necessary only that one *can be* aware of the factors that confer justification.

As has already been mentioned, Plantinga sees a close relationship between internalism and deontology. Plantinga sees internalism as being motivated by deontology: "[I]nternalism flows from deontology and is unmotivated without it".[20] Plantinga points out that the epistemic deontologist recognizes that we cannot guarantee that all of our beliefs are true (after all, we may be deceived by a malicious Cartesian demon). However, the deontologist wants to say that it is within our power to guarantee that all of our beliefs are justified; and, as Plantinga points out, this requires internalism. Deontology requires that we are able to be aware of the factors that confer justification, and that is just what internalism provides.[21]

The basic idea is that if we are responsible for ensuring that our beliefs are justified, then justification must be the kind of thing that it is within our power to bring

---

[20] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 29
[21] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 15

about. We can only bring it about that our beliefs are justified if the factors that confer justification are the sorts of things that we can be in a position to know; if they are not, then we cannot reasonably be held responsible for ensuring that our beliefs are justified. Given that the deontologists understand epistemic justification as consisting in proper observance of epistemic duty, it follows that one must be capable of knowing what one's epistemic duty is. One cannot be bound by an epistemic duty unless one can recognize and understand what one's epistemic duty requires. Therefore, the epistemic deontologist will naturally adopt internalism. Alvin Goldman concurs with Plantinga in his concise explanation of the connection between internalism and deontology:

> It is not feasible to conform to duty on a regular and consistent basis without knowing what items of conduct constitute those duties. Thus, if you are going to choose your beliefs and abstentions from belief in accordance with your justificational requirements, the facts that make you justified or unjustified in believing a certain proposition at a given time must be facts that you are capable of knowing, at that time, to hold or not to hold. [22]

C. Evidence

Plantinga holds that: "Deontological justification is justification most properly so-called"[23], with justification being understood in terms of praise-worthiness, blame-worthiness, and trying ones best to fulfil an epistemic duty. Within this tradition of classical deontologism the fulfilment of one's epistemic duty is typically understood in terms of believing only propositions for which there is sufficient evidence. Thus, deontological notions of justification are closely connected to the idea that evidence is necessary for justification.

---

[22] Alvin Goldman, "Internalism Exposed," *The Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999) 274
[23] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 25

As with epistemic deontology simpliciter, Plantinga thinks that the importance of evidence in the justified true belief tradition can best be explicated through an examination of Locke's understanding of justification. In his exposition of Locke, Plantinga explains that Locke understands justification in the deontological terms of blameless belief, being within one's rights, and observance of duty. Locke sees the chief duty as withholding belief from any proposition unless it is certain (self-evident or about one's own mental life – the 'properly basic beliefs' of modern classical foundationalism), or unless there is evidence that points to the truth of the belief. From this it naturally follows that nobody is justified in holding a belief without evidence. In this way, justification comes to be closely associated with the possession of adequate evidence.[24] Plantinga points out that deontological justification with an evidential requirement has been a hallmark of post-Lockean notions of 'justification', and has been espoused by prominent and influential thinkers such as W.K. Clifford, Sigmund Freud, Brand Blanshard, H.H. Price, Bertrand Russell, and Michael Scriven.[25]

While Plantinga thinks that evidentialism is most naturally understood in the context of deontology, he recognizes that not all evidentialists adopt the deontological conception of justification. Conee and Feldman are cited as examples of evidentialists who reject epistemic deontology.[26] Plantinga sees this non-deontological brand of evidentialism as an analogical extension of the original deontological notion of justification, since it adopts a key component of that notion. This non-deontological understanding of justification holds that justification essentially *is* believing on the basis of evidence, as opposed to epistemic duty fulfilment. Thus, the evidentialist may hold

[24] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 26
[25] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 26
[26] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 26

that a belief that is sufficiently supported by evidence is justified, regardless of whether the person deserves praise or blame for holding the belief, and irrespective of whether one has tried to bring about the epistemic end of believing only true propositions. The quality of the evidence is the sole determining factor of a belief's justificatory status.[27]

For evidentialists who reject deontology, justification can still be thought of as an evaluative term, since it "sets an epistemic standard for evaluating doxastic conduct".[28] Conee and Feldman think that a person ought not hold a belief for which there is no evidence. However, they take the question of whether one should be praised or blamed for the manner in which a belief is held to be irrelevant to the question of whether or not a belief is justified: only the quality of the evidence is relevant. Someone may strive unsuccessfully to believe only propositions that are supported by sufficient evidence in order to fulfil an epistemic duty to try to believe only true propositions. According to Conee and Feldman's account, such a person would fail to be justified with respect to those beliefs lacking sufficient support, despite having put forth her best effort. But the deontologist will be satisfied to say that one is justified upon trying one's best to fulfil this duty. According to the deontologist, one is justified as long as no duties have been flouted or ignored, and one acts in an epistemically responsible manner.

According to Conee and Feldman's evidentialist but non-deontological conception of epistemic justification, trying to form beliefs in an appropriate manner is not epistemically relevant when justification is at issue. According to their evidentialist conception of justification, only the quality of the evidence is relevant:

> The attitude that is justified according to EJ [evidential justification] is the one that as a matter of fact does fit one's evidence.... What would happen

[27] See Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies* 48 (1985) 15 - 33
[28] Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," 19

> if one tried to have a fitting attitude seems irrelevant – one may try but fail to form a fitting attitude.[29]

Conee and Feldman argue that a paranoid person may not deserve blame for holding paranoid beliefs, but the paranoid beliefs are unjustified as long as they are held in the absence of evidence. The paranoid person may be blameless since it is not her fault that she holds paranoid beliefs – she may be trying her best to form beliefs that are supported by adequate evidence. However, epistemically, the paranoid beliefs should not be held given the available evidence. Though they are held blamelessly, the paranoid beliefs violate an epistemic standard.

Given that not all evidentialists adopt deontology, it is fitting to refer to 'evidential justification' independently from 'deontological justification'. A belief is 'evidentially justified' if it is held in the presence of adequate evidence, and an 'evidentialist' conceives of justification in terms of 'evidential justification', seeing evidential justification as necessary for knowledge.

Plantinga points out that evidentialists, including those such as Conee and Feldman who reject epistemic deontology, maintain a close link between justification and internalism:

> According to Conee, "Justifying evidence must be internally available"; his idea is that the evidence in question cannot be evidence you could get from your world almanac, for example, but must rather be evidence you can come up with just by reflection.[30]

Plantinga goes on to say that this internalist requirement that evidentialists such as Conee and Feldman maintain is "a reflection of the classical connection between deontological

---

[29] Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," 20-21
[30] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 28

justification and epistemic internalism".[31] Plantinga is, however, at a loss to explain how evidentialists who reject deontology maintain this connection between evidentialism and internalism. Since Plantinga sees deontology as the motivation for internalism, he thinks that Conee and Feldman's rejection of deontology "leaves the internalism unmotivated and the connection between it and evidentialism obscure".[32]

II. Plantinga Contra Justification

Given that the Gettier problems demonstrate that one can hold a justified true belief without having knowledge, Plantinga's claim that justification is not sufficient for knowledge is relatively uncontentious. Plantinga contends that epistemologists within the 'justified true belief' camp maintain that justification, added to true belief, is necessary and nearly sufficient for knowledge, even if a fourth condition, a "quasi-technical fillip or addendum...is needed to appease Gettier".[33] The following exposition shall focus on Plantinga's more contentious claim: that justification, understood either in its original deontological form, or understood in solely evidentialist terms, is not necessary for knowledge.

A. Plantinga Contra Epistemic Deontology

Plantinga's main argument against the deontological notion of epistemic justification can be found in his critique of "Classical Chisholmian Internalism" in the second chapter of *Warrant: The Current Debate*. Chisholm holds that each person has a duty to try to bring it about that for each proposition that is considered, the proposition is believed just if it is true. Plantinga presents a scenario in which he assumes that he faithfully observes his

---

[31] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 28
[32] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 28-29
[33] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 6

duty to maintain epistemic excellence by trying his best to believe only true propositions. He comes to believe that we have been conquered by Alpha Centaurians, and that these Alpha Centaurians, who are monitoring our beliefs, dislike our believing that we perceive something red. Included in his beliefs is the belief that if the Alpha Centaurians discover that we believe we are perceiving something red, they will bring it about that we will come to hold a wildly false set of beliefs. Given this set of beliefs about our predicament, in these circumstances, he has an epistemic duty to refrain from thinking that he perceives something red, since by so believing, he would sabotage his chances of believing only true propositions. Despite encountering a number of red objects, he successfully trains himself to resist the urge to believe that he is perceiving something red upon encountering red objects; by doing so, he is fulfilling his epistemic duty since he is trying his best to bring about a state of affairs in which he can believe only true propositions. However, the exertion required to withhold beliefs about perceiving red objects eventually exhausts him. Since, due to exhaustion, he cannot continue to withhold beliefs about perceiving red, he finally decides to throw aside his epistemic duty. So, upon encountering a large red bus, he decides to "relax blissfully into the belief that I am now perceiving something red".[34] He argues that in doing so, given his beliefs about Alpha Centaurians, he is going against his epistemic duty – he is failing to try his best to bring it about that he believes only true propositions. Therefore, according to epistemic deontology, his belief that he perceives something red is unjustified. But though the belief is unjustified, it could nevertheless constitute knowledge: he can know that he is perceiving something red.

---

[34] Plantinga, Warrant: *The Current Debate*, 45

Based on the above example, that is designed to show that we can have knowledge without deontological justification, Plantinga concludes that epistemic justification, as understood by the epistemic deontologist, may have value, but it is not necessary for knowledge.[35] Since Plantinga takes warrant to be the property that "epistemizes" true belief, and deontologically justified true belief is neither necessary nor sufficient for knowledge, he concludes that warrant must be something entirely other than deontological justification.

B. Plantinga Contra Evidentialism

To refute evidentialism – the view that a belief is justified only if it is supported by adequate evidence – Plantinga provides examples of beliefs that are quite uncontroversial instances of knowledge and then argues that they are not formed on the basis of evidence. Since the beliefs are held apart from any justifying evidence while nevertheless seeming to constitute knowledge, he concludes that the evidentialist claim that evidential justification is necessary for knowledge has been falsified.

Two of his primary examples are memory beliefs and *a priori* beliefs. In the case of memory, Plantinga contends that there often seems to be no evidence at all for memory beliefs. In one example, he tells of his memory-based belief that he saw his friend Paul in California the previous year. He reflects on his belief and concludes that since there is a lack of phenomenal imagery accompanying his memory, there can be no significant connection between his phenomenal imagery and his memory belief – his memory belief certainly does not seem to be based upon the phenomenal imagery. Apart from phenomenal imagery, he can think of no other reasonable candidates that may fill the role of evidence on which to base his belief. So he concludes that he holds his memory-based

[35] Plantinga, Warrant: *The Current Debate*, 45

belief in the absence of evidence. But it is difficult to deny that his memory belief can nevertheless be an instance of knowledge. Therefore, contrary to the evidentialist claims, he has knowledge in the absence of evidence.[36]

Similarly, in the case of *a priori* beliefs, Plantinga contends that one is at a loss when one looks for the evidence upon which many *a priori* beliefs are based. One may, for example, entertain an instance of *modus ponens*, but, as in the case of memory, there seems to be no evidence upon which to base the belief that a conclusion can follow with deductive certainty from true premises.[37]

Plantinga considers the possibility that beliefs such as memory beliefs and *a priori* beliefs are based upon 'impulsional evidence': a strong felt tendency to adopt a belief. Plantinga offers the following explanation of impulsional evidence:

> Consider again the belief that 2 + 1 = 3; in addition to the sensuous imagery there is also something like a certain felt attractiveness of the belief; it feels right, somehow, and other beliefs you might consider in its place (2 + 1 = 5?) feel wrong, weird, absurd, eminently rejectable. 2 + 1 = 3 has about it a sense of rightness, or appropriateness. Perhaps the thing to say is that there is a sort of felt inclination, or impulse, to accept this proposition as opposed to others; indeed, perhaps impulsional evidence is no more than the phenomenal reflection of the fact that you do indeed believe the proposition in question.[38]

This impulsional evidence, he argues, may then account for memory beliefs and *a priori* beliefs. Plantinga's belief that he saw his friend Paul a year ago in California may be based on the felt attractiveness of the belief. The same may be said for instances of *modus ponens*.

---

[36] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 188
[37] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 188-189
[38] Alvin Plantinga, "Respondo," in *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology: Essays in Honor of Alvin Plantinga's Theory of Knowledge*, ed. Jonathan Kvanvig. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), 359-360

Plantinga argues that if impulsional evidence is indeed evidence, then a rational person cannot fail to have evidence for any belief that she actually holds, since he thinks it highly implausible to suppose that propositions are believed in the absence of an inclination to believe them. In fact, he thinks that you have impulsional evidence for a belief by virtue of holding the belief: "It isn't even possible that you believe p but lack impulsional evidence for it".[39] Given that he thinks that all beliefs that a person holds will have impulsional evidence for that person, and some instances of knowledge seem to have no evidence other than impulsional evidence, he concludes that the evidentialist's requirement that all belief be on the basis of evidence is either false or is rendered superfluous. If the only evidence that one has is impulsional evidence, there are many situations in which we would say that the person who has only impulsional evidence does not have *any* evidence. Plantinga cites instances where a person holds paranoid beliefs that carry with them a great deal of impulsional evidence; they have a great deal of felt attractiveness to the paranoid person. These beliefs are irrational because something more than impulsional evidence is needed.[40] However, unlike paranoid beliefs, Plantinga holds that memory-based beliefs and *a priori* beliefs can constitute knowledge without any other evidence.

So Plantinga rejects evidentialism because he thinks that the evidentialist must either include or exclude impulsion evidence as a legitimate source of evidence, and the evidentialist faces trouble with either alternative. Plantinga argues that if the evidentialist excludes impulsional evidence, then evidentialism is mistaken because many uncontroversial instances of knowledge, such as memory beliefs and *a priori* beliefs, are

---

[39] Plantinga, "Respondo," 360
[40] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 192

not based on any evidence at all. If the evidentialist includes impulsional evidence, then he does not propose a condition for knowledge; rather, he only proposes a condition for belief:

> [I]f he takes 'evidence' broadly (so that it includes impulsional evidence) then justification is indeed necessary for warrant – but only because it is necessary for belief itself. If so, however, the evidentialist isn't proposing a further condition of warrant independent of truth and belief; what he proposes is only a necessary condition of belief.[41]

III. Warrant

Plantinga takes it that his theory of warrant stands in stark contrast with the internalist 'justified true belief' analysis of knowledge passed down by the received tradition. As understood in either deontological or evidentialist forms, justification is an internalist notion. All of the internalist accounts are susceptible to refutation via Gettier-type counterexamples in which a subject holds a true belief that P, is justified in believing that P (according to the account of justification being considered), and fails to have a warranted belief that P. These examples are intended to show that justified true belief, as defined by the account being critiqued, is not sufficient for knowledge. There is a common thread running through all of these counterexamples – and the counterexamples are taken to indicate that there is a problem common to all of the accounts. The examples show that it is possible for P to be true, to be fully justified in believing that P and yet fail to have a warranted belief that P because the belief was formed by way of some sort of cognitive malfunction, or impairment.

Plantinga also takes it that all of the internalist accounts are also susceptible to counterexamples that demonstrate that justification is not necessary. To show that

---

[41] Plantinga, "Respondo," 361

justification is not necessary, he devises examples to show that according to the account, a belief that P can be unjustified, and yet it is possible to know P nonetheless. One such example is used to refute Chisholm's deontology. In the example, he acquires a set of Alpha Centaurian beliefs that impose a duty to abstain from believing that he sees something red. Since he can nevertheless know that he sees something red, even though the belief goes against his duty, he concludes that deontological justification is not necessary for warrant.

Plantinga supports the conclusion that evidentialism is not necessary for warrant by arguing that there are non-controversial instances of knowledge that are not supported by evidence. He cites memory beliefs and *a priori* beliefs as examples of non-controversial instances of knowledge that are often not supported by evidence. Thus he concludes that evidential justification is not necessary for knowledge. Since he thinks that all internalist accounts are susceptible to refutation via the two kinds of counterexamples outlined above – examples that demonstrate that justification is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant – he concludes that internalism ought to be abandoned as being on the wrong track.

Since he sees internalism as being fundamentally flawed, he thinks it natural to turn to externalism. As an externalist, he denies that he must have access upon reflection or introspection to the factors that confer warrant. He instead agrees with the externalist in holding that the factors that confer warrant are facts that are external to one's cognitive perspective, including environmental factors and facts about the workings of one's own cognitive mechanisms. In addition to the internalist accounts of justification that he surveys in *Warrant: The Current Debate*, Plantinga also examines and rejects a number

of externalist accounts. The externalist accounts that he critiques are all examples of 'reliabilism', of which his theory can be considered a species. Since reliabilism is a form of externalism, Plantinga thinks that the only thing that reliabilist accounts of justification have in common with internalist accounts is that they both use the term 'justification'. Reliabilists hold that a belief is justified if the ground upon which the belief was formed is a reliable indicator of the truth of the belief (Alstonian reliabilism), or the belief-producing mechanism that produced the belief reliably produces true beliefs (early Goldman's reliabilism – he also calls this "paradigm reliabilism"). While Plantinga thinks that reliabilism is a major step in the right direction, and that reliabilism does outline a necessary condition for warrant, he thinks that it falls short of providing a sufficient account of warrant, since it is possible for a belief to be justified according to the reliabilist account and yet fail to be warranted.

As he begins to outline his account of warrant, Plantinga observes that: "The first thing to see, I think, is that this notion of proper function is the rock on which the canvassed accounts of warrant founder."[42] He goes on to mention that cognitive malfunction has been a recurring theme in his counterexamples that refute alternatives to his theory. So, the idea of properly functioning cognitive faculties plays a role of first and foremost importance in his epistemology. Thus, it seems fitting to begin an examination of Plantinga's theory of warrant with a brief explanation of the 'cognitive faculties' that need to function properly.

A. Cognitive Faculties

Plantinga does not think that he is introducing a novel idea when he talks about cognitive faculties; rather, he points out that going back to Plato and Aristotle, there has been an

[42] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 4

assumption that we have cognitive powers, faculties, or virtues whose purpose is to furnish us with knowledge.[43] Perhaps the easiest way to understand what Plantinga means when he refers to cognitive faculties is to look at some examples of what he calls 'cognitive faculties'. Perception and memory, along with reason constitute what Plantinga calls the "standard package", since they are the main faculties by which we come to know the basic facts about the world.[44] When my faculty of perception is functioning properly, my beliefs about what I perceive should be generally reliable (e.g. I believe that I am seeing a tree only if I am in fact seeing a tree). When my faculty of memory is functioning properly, I recall events that actually happened, and that I actually was somehow involved in (e.g. as opposed to a case where I think that I remember being present for an incident when in fact I only heard people talk about it on numerous occasions). Reason seems to be a less straightforward faculty than perception or memory, but it can be said that when my faculty of reason is functioning properly, I will make valid inferences.

In addition to perception, memory, and reason, Plantinga lists the faculties of introspection, induction, sympathy, and testimony or credulity. Each of these faculties allows us to form certain kinds of beliefs; for example, introspection allows us to form beliefs about ourselves, induction allows us to form beliefs about what will probably occur in the future, sympathy allows us to form beliefs about the mental states of others, and testimony allows us to learn from what others tell us.[45] Perhaps the most controversial of the cognitive faculties that Plantinga discusses is the "*sensus divinitatis*": "a natural, inborn sense of God, or divinity, that is the origin and source of the world's

---

[43] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 146
[44] Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 147
[45] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 147

religions".[46] According to Plantinga's account, when the *sensus divinitatis* is functioning properly, it leads to the formation of appropriate beliefs about God.

B. Proper Function

The purpose of our cognitive faculties is belief production. Plantinga argues that a belief is warranted, and can thus constitute knowledge, only if the cognitive faculty that produced it was functioning properly. It is important to note, however, that not all properly functioning cognitive faculties produce warranted belief. For example, Plantinga points out that we may have a cognitive faculty that produces optimistic beliefs about the chances that we will survive a serious illness, even when the statistics indicate that the probability of survival is actually extremely low. Such beliefs lack warrant, because they are produced by a cognitive faculty whose purpose is something other than the production of true beliefs. Rather, its purpose is something like survival, or to serve as a coping mechanism.[47] Of present concern are cognitive faculties whose purpose is the production of true beliefs.

Plantinga argues that this notion of proper function is best understood in terms of the design plan, since a thing's design plan specifies the way it functions when it is functioning properly.[48] The design plan for a human being consists of a set of specifications for how the various systems within a human being ought to function when functioning properly. When a system fails to operate within its specifications, the organism is adversely affected, since the system fails to perform its function.

Plantinga seems initially open to the possibility that 'proper function' can be understood in naturalistic terms that exclude the notion of conscious design. For example,

---

[46] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 148
[47] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 16
[48] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 213

one can say that the function of the heart is to pump blood, and it performs this function best when it works according to a set of specifications that outline optimal heart rate, blood pressure, etc. One does not have to assume that the set of specifications that specify proper coronary function are the result of conscious design; rather, they may be the result of the mechanism of natural selection. Similarly, one can suppose that evolution, thought of in naturalistic terms (one can think of in supernaturalist terms, as being directed by God), may have furnished our cognitive faculties with a set of specifications for proper function. While Plantinga entertains the possibility that evolutionary naturalism can account for proper function, by the end of *Warrant and Proper Function*, it is quite clear that he thinks that proper function cannot be properly understood outside of the context of a theistic metaphysic. So, interestingly, Plantinga argues that naturalized epistemology – which he takes his theory to be a species of – flourishes best in the context of a theistic metaphysic. Plantinga takes his theory of warrant to be a version of naturalistic epistemology because the only kind of normativity he admits is that of proper function – when a person's cognitive faculties are functioning properly, they 'ought' to form certain kinds of beliefs in a way analogous to how a person's heart should beat within a certain range of beats per minute when the circulatory system is functioning properly.[49]

Plantinga argues that this notion of proper function is absolutely essential for understanding warrant. Reliabilism, another externalist theory that is a close relative of Plantinga's theory (as we shall see, Plantinga's theory of warrant includes a reliabilist component) fails to see the importance of proper function, and Plantinga thinks that this causes reliabilism to fall short of accounting for warrant. While Plantinga thinks that reliability is a necessary condition for warrant, he does not think that it is sufficient. At

[49] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 210-211

this point, it is necessary to point out that reliabilism, as put forth by various epistemologists such as Goldman, Dretske, and Alston, has its own unique contours and nuances in each case. Since it will not be possible to spell out each version, I will instead deal with what Plantinga calls "paradigm reliabilism": "The basic idea is that a belief has warrant if it is produced by a reliable belief-producing mechanism or power or faculty".[50]

Plantinga thinks that through an examination of reliabilism we can come to see the importance of proper function. When proper function is excluded from a reliabilist account, any belief-producing mechanism or faculty that reliably produces true beliefs produces warranted beliefs. However, Plantinga argues that an otherwise reliable belief-producing faculty fails to produce warranted beliefs if it functions improperly. Plantinga points out that my vision may be a reliable faculty, but if I am suffering from a fever or delirium tremens, it can produce beliefs that lack warrant.[51]

Typically, a cognitive malfunction will cause the affected faculty to no longer reliably produce true beliefs. However, Plantinga also argues that it is possible for a belief-producing mechanism to reliably produce true beliefs that lack warrant. Plantinga illustrates this possibility with the example of the "Epistemically Serendipitous Lesion". He presents a scenario where a person has a brain lesion that causes the occurrence of a number of processes, most of which cause its victim to hold absurdly false beliefs. However, the lesion also causes a process that results in the victim forming the true belief that he has a brain lesion (this despite having no evidence for and plenty of evidence against the belief). In the example, the brain lesion reliably causes the victim to hold the true belief that he has a brain lesion. Plantinga thinks that in the example, the victim's

---

[50] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 208

[51] Alvin Plantinga, "Reliabilism, Analyses, and Defeaters," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, (1995): 428

belief that he has a brain lesion meets the reliabilist condition because the relevant process is the one that produces the belief, and that process reliably produces a true belief. However, Plantinga argues that we surely do not want to say that the victim knows he has a brain lesion.[52] The example is intended to show that if a true belief is reliably produced as the result of a cognitive glitch, then it is only accidentally reliable, and this accidental reliability is not sufficient for warrant – proper function is also needed.[53] So Plantinga concludes that while reliabilism contains an element of truth, reliability is not sufficient for warrant because, in addition to reliability, warrant requires proper function.

C. Cognitive Environment

Another important aspect of Plantinga's notion of warrant is that a belief produced by the appropriate cognitive faculty (one whose purpose is the production of true beliefs), when that faculty is functioning properly, according to the design plan has warrant only if the belief is produced in an appropriate cognitive environment. Plantinga argues that our cognitive faculties are adapted to our surroundings. Since our cognitive faculties are adapted to our surroundings, if we find ourselves in an environment for which our faculties are not suited – in which they were not designed to function – they may produce unwarranted beliefs even if they are functioning flawlessly according to their design specifications.[54]

Plantinga thinks that this component of his theory – this account of the importance of the cognitive environment – gives his theory a suitable way of dealing with Gettier problems: a way that is not available to internalists. According to Plantinga's externalist theory of warrant, the warrant that a belief enjoys is a product of how and

---

[52] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 199
[53] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 210
[54] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 214

where the belief is formed – and all of the relevant facts are not necessarily facts that the subject can be aware of upon introspection or reflection. Facts about the workings of one's own cognitive faculties, or facts about the cognitive environment, may be inaccessible to the subject. Internalist justification, on the other hand, depends upon the subject believing in a manner appropriate given the facts that she is aware of. The Gettier problems depend on situations in which a true belief is justified, but the facts about the environment – facts that are not accessible to the subject – are such that it ends up being a happy coincidence that the belief is true, so the subject fails to know.

In the case of Gettier problems, the problem essentially lies in a glitch in the cognitive environment. For example, in the "either Smith owns a Ford, or Brown in Barcelona" example, the problem lies in Smith's attempt to deceive. Plantinga argues that there is a cognitive faculty of 'testimony' or 'credulity': a natural tendency to believe what others tell us. This faculty is designed to operate in a congenial environment, which would be one in which people do not attempt to deceive us. However, since Smith is attempting to deceive by claiming to own a Ford, and presenting corroborating evidence for that fact, the belief that Smith owns a Ford fails to acquire the warrant requisite for knowledge.[55] Thus, the belief that "Smith owns a Ford or Brown is in Barcelona" is unwarranted, and fails to constitute knowledge; this despite the fact that one is justified in forming the belief – no epistemic duties are being ignored, and in addition to his testimony, Smith provides evidence that he owns a Ford – and despite the fact that the belief is true. In all Gettier-type examples, the cognitive environment deviates from what would be considered appropriate. Our cognitive faculties may be operating flawlessly,

---

[55] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 82-88

drawing conclusions appropriate for the evidence at hand, but an anomaly in the environment can still result in the production of an unwarranted belief.

D. Reliability

A final but important condition that Plantinga includes in his account of warrant is reliability. The reliabilist component of Plantinga's theory is embedded in the idea that the design plan must be a good one – that the cognitive faculties aimed at the production of true beliefs in a congenial environment reliably produce true beliefs in the appropriate circumstances. If the designer is incompetent, then properly functioning truth-directed cognitive faculties, functioning in the environment for which they were designed, could fail to produce true beliefs with any regularity. In the case of a failing design plan, when a true belief happens to be produced, that belief would have little warrant. If the design plan is a good one, cognitive faculties whose purpose is the production of true beliefs in a congenial environment will reliably produce true beliefs in that environment. According to this condition, a belief, B, that is produced by a cognitive faculty whose purpose is the production of true beliefs, functioning properly in a congenial cognitive environment, has warrant only if the objective probability of B's being true under these conditions is appropriately high.[56]

The above conditions are taken by Plantinga to be necessary and sufficient for warrant. When added to true belief, Plantinga takes it that they 'epistemize' true belief: they are what are needed for the true belief to constitute knowledge. In *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga states these conditions clearly and succinctly:

---

[56] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 17

> Put in a nutshell, then, a belief has warrant for a person S only if that belief is produced in S by cognitive faculties functioning properly (subject to no dysfunction) in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for S's kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth.[57]

[57] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 156

Chapter 2

The first task in this chapter shall be to assess Plantinga's interpretation of internalist theories of justification, which he takes to be internalist theories of warrant. The contentious issue that shall be addressed is whether or not internalist theories of justification can be properly understood as theories of warrant: of what, added to true belief, is both necessary and sufficient for knowledge. If internalist theories of justification cannot be understood as theories of warrant, then there is a question of why epistemologists continue to present internalist theories. I shall suggest an answer to this question. Next, I shall examine Plantinga's arguments for the view that justification, understood in either deontological or evidentialist terms, is not necessary for knowledge.

I. Warrant and Justification

A. Internalist Justification as Nowhere Near Sufficient for Warrant

Plantinga makes it quite clear that, according to his theory of warrant, justification is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant. The claim that justification is not sufficient for warrant is the more easily defensible. In fact, one could make a good case to the effect that no contemporary epistemologists, particularly the ones whose views Plantinga surveys in *Warrant: The Current Debate*, claim that any internalist theory of justification can serve as a theory of warrant. Richard Feldman makes this argument:

> In my view, approximately no recent nonskeptical epistemologists have been internalists about warrant. In particular, the contemporary philosophers Plantinga takes as characteristic internalists have not been internalists about warrant. They have been internalists about something else – justification – but not about warrant.[58]

[58] Richard Feldman. "Plantinga, Gettier, and Warrant". Kvanvig, 200

Feldman points out that there is no internalist condition – nothing available to the cognizer through introspection – that can solve Gettier problems. Feldman argues that even Chisholm, who is clearly an internalist about justification, sees that internalist justification is not sufficient for warrant. Because of this, his work evolved to include an additional condition – an externalist condition – in his epistemology:

> His account of what else is needed evolved over time, but in all cases the something else was something externalist in character. In the first edition of *Theory of Knowledge* he says that a person knows *h* only if something that justifies *h* justifies no falsehoods (P. 23). This is no internalist condition, since two worlds internally alike could be such that in one a justifier justifies no falsehoods while in another it does justify a falsehood.[59]

It seems that Chisholm's basic position in *Theory of Knowledge* is that internalist justification is necessary but not always sufficient for warrant. To use Plantinga's terminology, a person can be justified in believing *h* without possessing a warranted belief *that h*. Whether or not a justified belief *that h* has warrant will be, as illustrated by the Gettier examples, ultimately dependent upon circumstances outside of the introspective awareness of the believing subject.

Feldman objects to Plantinga's characterization of contemporary internalist theories of justification as attempting to provide a theory of warrant by adding a "fillip to mollify Gettier" to their accounts of justification. On Plantinga's characterization, internalists believe that only a technical fillip is needed, since he takes it that internalists believe that justification is necessary and almost sufficient for warrant. Feldman, however, argues that Gettier has turned the world of internalist justification upside down. As a result, contemporary internalists realize that justification is nowhere near sufficient for knowledge. While a justified true belief analysis may get many cases right – cases in

[59] Feldman, "Plantinga, Gettier and Warrant," 201

which there is a rational subject and no anomalies in the cognitive environment – Gettier problems show that justification does not and cannot provide a complete picture of what, added to true belief, results in knowledge.

If this is correct, then whatever one's views regarding justification – whether or not one thinks that internalism can give an adequate account of justification – one cannot give an anywhere near adequate internalist account of warrant. Contemporary epistemologists seem to at least agree that whatever internalist account of justification is given, Gettier problems muddy the waters as far as warrant is concerned, and therefore internalist justification is not sufficient for warrant. However, this does not entail that internalist justification is not valuable, and perhaps even necessary for warrant.

B. The Value of Internalist Justification

According to internalist theories of justification, in principle, one can tell upon reflection whether or not a belief is justified. Plantinga's theory of warrant is externalist, entailing that one cannot tell by reflection whether or not a belief has warrant. Warrant is a product of the manner in which our faculties function, and the suitability of the environment in which they function. These are not the kinds of facts that are accessible to the cognizer upon reflection. Thus, in principle, it is not possible to tell whether a belief has warrant because the factors that confer warrant are external to the scope of one's awareness.

Since unqualified externalism (externalism without any internalist constraints) leaves us in a position where we cannot evaluate the epistemic status of our beliefs by reflection, it is easy to be unsatisfied with externalism. Many feel that internalist constraints are essential for a satisfactory epistemic theory of warrant or justification. As William Alston observes, there are "widely shared and strong intuitions in favor of some

kind of accessibility requirement for justification".[60] As explained in the previous chapter, Plantinga thinks that these internalist intuitions follow naturally from the deontological conception of epistemic justification – from the "ought implies can" principle; and he gives them no further explanation. In fact, he is puzzled by internalists who fail to endorse a deontological conception of justification, since he fails to detect any motivation for their internalism.

Though Plantinga understands internalism as an entailment of deontological assumptions, one can find motivation for internalism apart from deontological assumptions. Internalism allows us to pursue questions that are left unanswerable by externalist theories. As Richard Fumerton argues:

> Knowing, or having a justified belief, in the externalist's sense doesn't satisfy our philosophical curiosity, doesn't answer our philosophical questions, because qua philosophers trying to be rational, we want more than to be automata responding to stimuli with beliefs. I would argue that we want *facts*, including facts about which propositions make probable others, before our consciousness. [61]

As rational agents, we want to hold beliefs that are likely to be true, given what we already know, believe, and are aware of. If a belief is not likely to be true, given the facts that we have at our disposal, then it is unreasonable for us to hold the belief – the belief is unjustified. Thus, an internalist account of justification provides grounds on which to assess the reasonableness of our beliefs – internalist accounts provide a basis upon which a rational agent can assess the reasonableness of her epistemic activity. If we find externalism unsatisfying, it is likely because we want the facts that we are or can be aware of to count for something in this assessment of reasonableness; and, we want this

---

[60] William Alston "An Internalist Externalism" *Synthese* 74 (1988) 272

[61] Richard Fumerton. "The Internalism/Externalism Controversy," *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988) 455

evaluation of reasonableness to be acknowledged as epistemically significant. And there seems to be little reason to think that only deontological theories can provide this basis for assessing the reasonableness of epistemic activity. The reasonableness of a belief can be assessed by only considering the evidence, since the facts about which propositions make probable others before our consciousness may be facts that are explicable in purely evidentialist terms. Thus, one can have a strong motivation for internalism irrespective of whether or not one is drawn to a deontological version of internalism.

Though internalism cannot provide us with the sufficient conditions for knowledge, there is good reason to pursue the question of whether or not we can discover or develop an internalist account of justification that allows us to pursue questions that externalism leaves unanswered. So I will now turn my attention to that task through a critical analysis of Plantinga's understanding and critique of justification. Throughout this analysis, I will attempt to ascertain whether we can find a plausible, workable, and epistemically significant internalist account of justification. I will then take up the question of whether or not internalist justification, as I think it is best understood, is a necessary condition for knowledge.

II. Prospects for Internalist Justification

A. Plantinga's Conception of Deontological Justification

Internalists claim that justification is necessary for warrant, and hence for knowledge. There is a sense (as it turns out, a rather trivial sense) in which Plantinga would agree. Plantinga agrees, for instance, that Christian belief ought to be deontologically justified; that if it is not – if the Christian cannot be within her epistemic rights in believing– then

there is something wrong with Christian belief.[62] But since Plantinga has rejected the epistemic duties that are typically prescribed by deontologists (e.g. believing only where there is evidence, trying one's best to bring it about that only true propositions are believed) are necessary for warrant, all that deontological justification requires, on his construal of it, is that *S* believes *B* only if *B* seems to *S* to be true, even upon careful reflection, including reflecting upon objections to *B*. If *B* seems utterly obviously true to *S*, and still seems so upon careful reflection, then, according to Plantinga, *S* is deontologically justified in believing *B*, since one cannot be blamed for believing *B*.[63]

The form of deontological justification that Plantinga appears to be endorsing rejects the necessity of observance of a positive epistemic duty, and instead allows for belief when one is aware of no compelling reason to think that in holding a belief, one is violating an epistemic principle. Since he rejects the traditionally prescribed duty to believe only in the presence of supporting evidence, he thinks that in many cases where evidence is not forthcoming, it is still possible to claim 'deontological justification'. For example, in "Reason and Belief in God", Plantinga argues that theistic belief is deontologically justified, even if it lacks any evidential support. The theist is justified in believing because theism seems to her to be true, and by so believing she is violating no epistemic duties. This accords well with William Alston's understanding of 'deontological justification'. Alston defines deontological justification in the following way:

> To say that S is justified in believing that p at time t is to say that the relevant rules or principles do not forbid S's believing that p at t.[64]

---

[62] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 100
[63] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 100-101
[64] William Alston. "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," 258

According to Alston's definition, the deontological conception of epistemic justification prescribes that a person is deontologically justified in holding a belief if no epistemic principles are violated when holding the belief. Of course, if one accepts classical epistemic deontology, believing where there is a lack of evidential support for a proposition would constitute a violation of an epistemic principle. This requirement to believe only propositions that have appropriate evidential support can be seen as a way of attempting to fulfil a more general epistemic duty of the type stated by Chisholm:

> We may assume that every person is subject to a purely intellectual requirement: that of trying his best to bring it about that for any proposition *p* he considers, he accepts *p* if and only if *p* is true.[65]

According to Chisholm's deontology, justification is a matter of trying one's best to bring it about that one believes only true propositions. While he thinks that trying to bring it about that one believes only true propositions may be a virtuous and admirable way to conduct one's epistemic activity, Plantinga rejects Chisholmian deontology as neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant. More specifically, Plantinga rejects the idea that warrant requires deontological justification in the sense of "trying one's best" – of exerting effort towards the epistemic end of believing only true propositions. Rather, Plantinga argues that one can be warranted in believing what seems to be true, as long as one can do so without being epistemically culpable, and as long as there is no reason not to hold the belief:

> Chisholm's principles yield wholly wrong results. In many of these cases, the way for a person to try his best to achieve epistemic excellence will depend, naturally enough, upon what he (nonculpably) believes about the way to achieve epistemic excellence. In particular, if a person is strongly (and nonculpably) convinced of the truth of a proposition – if that proposition seems obviously true to him – then (barring defeating conditions) the way for him to try to achieve epistemic excellence is to

[65] Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 14

> accept it; and the more obvious it seems to him, the more status of this sort it has for him.[66]

The point where Plantinga disagrees with Chisholm can be seen most clearly if we recall the example Plantinga uses to refute Chisholm's epistemic deontology. In the example, his Alpha Centaurian beliefs give him a reason to direct a great deal of effort towards withholding assent from the proposition that he is perceiving something red, so he fights the temptation to believe what seems to him to be obviously true. It seems that what Plantinga is rejecting is the notion that one must direct one's efforts towards shaping one's beliefs to accord with what is required by an epistemic duty; that one must try one's best to appropriately shape one's beliefs.

Plantinga's rejection of Chisholm's deontology may be partly based on his belief that it is not sensible to say that we can simply abstain from believing a proposition. While he does think that we have some degree of indirect control over our beliefs (we can train ourselves not to jump to hasty conclusions, to consult reliable sources, etc.) he thinks it implausible to suppose that we have direct control over our beliefs to the point where we can either believe or withhold assent from a proposition.[67] If a proposition seems to us to be true, we cannot help but believe it. Thus there cannot be a requirement to try one's best to give or withhold assent in accordance with a perceived epistemic duty. Plantinga instead thinks that if a proposition carries with it the phenomenology associated with impulsional evidence – a seeming to be true – we simply believe the proposition and cannot do otherwise. Therefore, in the Alpha Centaurian example, he is in no position to do anything but flout what he takes to be his epistemic duty – the duty to abstain from

---

[66] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 43
[67] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 96

believing that he is perceiving something red – and simply believe that he is perceiving something red; after all, that he is perceiving something red seems to him to be obviously true. If he cannot believe otherwise, he cannot be blamed.

Interestingly, this entails that one can be deontologically justified in flouting what one takes to be one's epistemic duty. This further reveals that there are to very different conceptions of deontological justification at work here. In the classical conception – which Plantinga rejects – directing effort towards the observance of epistemic duty is required for deontological justification. One must adopt and diligently adhere to policies and follow procedures that will allow one to achieve the goal of assenting to true propositions and withholding assent from false propositions. In the example that Plantinga uses to refute Chisholm's conception of deontological justification, given his Alpha Centaurian beliefs, he is not – according to the duty to try one's best to ensure that one believes only truths – deontologically justified in allowing himself to believe that he is perceiving a red bus. His Alpha Centaurian beliefs give him a reason to not assent to the proposition that he is perceiving a red bus. According to Chisholmian deontologism, his duty to withhold assent from the proposition that he is perceiving something red is determined by his belief that assenting to the proposition will derail his goal of believing only true propositions.

Plantinga is right to reject the idea that Chisholm's notion of deontological justification is necessary for warrant. He rightly recognizes that deontological justification, as understood by Chisholm, "is a fine thing, a valuable state of affairs – intrinsically as well as extrinsically; but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for

warrant".[68] Surely, through trying our best to believe only true propositions, we can come to know many propositions that we would not know otherwise, and we can avoid believing many false propositions that would be believed as a result of epistemic laziness and negligence. However, there are many propositions that we can know even if we are epistemically lazy and negligent. Trying ones best to believe only true propositions is desirable and commendable, and will, in many cases, lead to favourable epistemic results; but it is neither necessary nor sufficient for warrant. It's not being sufficient for warrant is not of very much consequence, because, as we have seen, Chisholm does not propose it as a theory of warrant. However, there seems to be no reason to think that deontological justification of this sort is necessary for warrant, since we can know many things apart from trying our best to fulfil an epistemic duty in believing them. In the Alpha Centaurian example, he does seem to know that he is perceiving something red, despite believing counter to his perceived duty to withhold assent from the proposition. Furthermore, he cannot sensibly be expected to withhold belief since it seems implausible to think that it is within his power to do so.

In addition to the Alpha Centaurian example discussed above, Plantinga also produces a number of examples that show that, given Plantinga's assumptions, deontological justification, as he understands it, becomes a trivial matter. In one of his examples Plantinga outlines a scenario in which he believes that he will be the next president of the United States, despite the fact that he has no political experience whatsoever (excluding an unsuccessful bid for the vice-presidency of his sophomore class in college). Due to a cognitive malfunction, this belief seems to him to be obviously true – as obviously true as the elementary truths of mathematics. He argues that since he

[68] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 45

is not aware of his cognitive malfunction, he is deontologically justified in holding the belief that he will be the next United States President

> So if I try to achieve epistemic excellence, I will count this proposition among the one's I accept. The way for me to try to achieve epistemic excellence in these circumstances, I should think, is for me to act on what I (nonculpably) believe about how best to achieve this end. But this proposition seems obviously true to me; so, naturally enough, I believe that the way to achieve epistemic excellence here is to accept it. We may add, if we like, that I am exceptionally dutiful, deeply concerned with my epistemic duty; I am eager to bring it about that I am in the right relation to the truth, and am trying my level best to do so. Then, surely, I am doing my epistemic duty in accepting the proposition in question; nevertheless that proposition has little by way of warrant for me.[69]

Plantinga's argument is that though one may be completely deluded, and thus arrive at wildly false conclusions, it is, however, unreasonable to fault someone for believing what seems to be obviously true. Thus, in another example, the inmate at the Pine Rest Christian Psychiatric Hospital is justified in believing that Chicago was populated by a method of reproduction that he calls 'rotational reproduction', that involves producing a large number of children by suspending a woman from the ceiling with a rope and rotating her at a high rate of speed. Plantinga notes that this man may be doing his level best to carry out his cognitive duties; if so, his mad 'rotational reproduction' belief is justified.[70]

So Plantinga seems to endorse a conception of deontological justification that prescribes that one is deontologically justified in believing what seems obviously true. As a result, according to Plantinga's analysis, many bizarre beliefs can enjoy deontological justification. Furthermore, given his assumptions, his position seems to entail (perhaps inadvertently) that all beliefs that one actually holds are deontologically justified, since

---

[69] Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate*, 44
[70] Plantinga *Warranted Christian Belief*, 101

seeming obviously true is the distinguishing characteristic of impulsional evidence, and he argues elsewhere that all beliefs that one holds have impulsional evidence for the person holding them.

> You have impulsional evidence for *p* just by virtue of believing p; *p* fits *this* kind of evidence just if you believe it. It isn't even possible that you believe *p* but lack impulsional evidence for it; how could it be that you believe *p* although *p* doesn't seem to you to be true?[71]

When he outlines his account of impulsional evidence, he makes it clear that he thinks that all beliefs a person holds will have impulsional evidence for that person, and thus seem to that person to be true. In his analysis of deontological justification, he assumes that one cannot sensibly be blamed for believing what one thinks to be true. Since one cannot be blamed for believing what seems to be true, and people believe only what seems to them to be true, it follows that all beliefs are deontologically justified – all beliefs are such that one cannot be blamed for holding them.

While the assumptions mentioned above entail that all beliefs that one actually holds are deontologically justified, Plantinga does, in passing, refer to conditions in which a belief can fail to be deontologically justified. He mentions that one must be nonculpably convinced of the truth of a proposition, and that there should be no defeating conditions. I will first discuss the effect of defeaters on deontological justification.

Broadly defined, a defeater for a belief is a belief that, when acquired, serves as a reason for our noetic structure to be modified. Plantinga provides a more precise definition of a defeater:

> A defeater for a belief *b*, then, is another belief *d* such that, given my noetic structure, I cannot rationally hold *b*, given that I believe *d*. In the

[71] Plantinga, "Respondo," 360

> typical case of defeat, I will first believe *b* and then later come to believe the defeater *d*.[72]

A defeater gives us reason to change our attitude towards the defeated belief: in some cases, we will hold the defeated belief with less certainty; in other cases, we ought not continue to hold the belief at all. Furthermore, a defeater can be defeated by yet another belief: a defeater-defeater.

While Plantinga states that one is deontologically justified in believing what seems obviously true, barring defeating conditions, it is difficult to see how defeaters bear any relevance to his understanding of deontological justification. According to Plantinga's understanding of defeaters, defeaters can defeat *rationality*, or they defeat *warrant*.[73] If you acquire a rationality defeater for a belief, you can continue to hold that belief only on pain of irrationality. In such a case, I am given a reason to no longer hold the belief in question. In the presence of a rationality defeater for a belief, *b*, the appropriate doxastic response is to no longer believe *b*,or to believe *b* with less certainty. If my belief *b* remains unaltered, then my defeater system is functioning improperly. Given Plantinga's assumptions regarding deontological justification, it is difficult to see why I would fail to be deontologically justified in continuing to believe *b* if it continues to seem to me to be true. In the spirit of Plantinga's examples, I would be cognitively dysfunctional, but deontologically justified. How can I be blamed for a malfunction in my defeater system?

In the case of warrant defeaters, defeaters are not typically beliefs; rather, warrant defeaters are typically situations or circumstances. Warrant defeaters do not render

---

[72] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 361
[73] Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 359

beliefs irrational; instead, beliefs lose their warrant in the presence of a warrant defeater. If I encounter a warrant defeater for a belief, *b*, I may be rational in continuing to believe *b*, but *b* would lack warrant. In the Gettier examples, Smith is not irrational in believing that Jones owns a Ford, but Jones's deception defeats the warrant of Smith's belief. In fact, all situations in which I acquire a warrant defeater are, or closely resemble Gettier cases. Since the consensus is that belief is justified in Gettier cases, warrant defeaters bear no relevance for deontological justification.

Rationality defeaters do appear to be relevant to the question of whether or not one is deontologically justified in holding a belief. However, this appearance is deceiving. If one acquires a rationality defeater for a belief, then one ought not continue to hold that belief. But 'ought' in this sense is the ought of proper function. The proper functioning of the defeater system is specified by the design plan, and failure to modify one's beliefs appropriately is the result of cognitive malfunction.[74] Therefore, as used in the context of Plantinga's theory, 'ought' does not properly refer to duty or obligation. Rather, 'ought' is to be understood in a manner analogous to the way our blood pressure 'ought' to be within a certain range; if it is not, then our circulatory system is not functioning properly. When defeaters are encountered, our cognitive faculties ought to revise our noetic structure; if they do not, then our cognitive faculties are not functioning properly.

Furthermore, rationality defeaters are relative to one's noetic structure. In a rational noetic structure, a defeater, *d*, defeats a belief, *b*, only if *d* is believed. However, there are a number of possible situations in which a potential defeater will not be believed. If *b* seems obviously true, one may become incapable of believing propositions

[74] Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, 40-42

that can potentially serve as a defeater for *b*. If a belief, *b*, is believed with a higher degree of certainly than a defeater, *d*, then *b* can itself defeat *d*.[75] Thus, if a belief is held with a high degree of certainty, it will be very difficult to defeat, so one can hold it rationally in practically any circumstance.

Also, cognitive dysfunction may cause a person to dismiss any potential defeaters for a belief. In Plantinga's example, due to cognitive dysfunction, his belief that he will become president seems as obviously true to him as the elementary truths of mathematics. In the example he seems to be aware of no defeaters for his belief. His dysfunction must make it the case that is incapable of acquiring a defeater for his belief. If it were not for cognitive dysfunction, surely defeaters would be plentiful. But cognitive dysfunction can prevent defeating conditions from obtaining either by causing him to believe the proposition in question so firmly that any potential defeaters will be dismissed, or by not allowing him to grasp the significance of any potential defeaters. If the above analysis is correct, his cognitive dysfunction can work to ensure that his unwarranted belief is justified; it continues to seem true to him, and he cannot be blamed for believing it.

But there are, of course, situations in which defeating conditions can and do obtain; situations in which one holds a belief *b*, and later acquires a defeater, *d*, for belief *b;* situations in which a defeater is both grasped and not dismissed. It may be the case that one nevertheless continues to hold a belief despite believing a defeater. According to the no-defeater proviso placed on deontological justification, this should mean that the belief for which there is a defeater lacks deontological justification. But it is difficult to see why

---

[75] In "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply, " *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986): 306-312 Plantinga argues that a belief may be an "intrinsic defeater-defeater". In other words, if a belief seems obviously true, it may itself defeat propositions that entail it's falsity.

defeaters should have this consequence. Plantinga says that one is deontologically justified in believing what seems to be true, unless there are defeating conditions. But what if I continue to hold a belief that seems to me to be true, despite the presence of defeating conditions? Why should my belief lack deontological justification? Given Plantinga's understanding of 'defeaters', continuing to hold a belief in the presence of a defeater is indicative of irrationality, in the sense of cognitive dysfunction. If a belief is held in the presence of a rationality defeater, the belief is irrational since it is the result of cognitive malfunction; but why should it indicate a lack of deontological justification if the proposition still seems to be true? In the absence of cognitive dysfunction, a proposition will no longer seem to be true in the presence of a defeating belief, and thus it will no longer be believed (or it will be believed less firmly). Therefore, in a healthy noetic structure, there is no question remaining regarding the justificatory status of beliefs for which there is a defeater. But what if there is cognitive dysfunction present, and this dysfunction causes a belief to be held in the presence of a defeater? Plantinga's examples seem to indicate that beliefs held in this way retain their deontological justification. Due to cognitive malfunction, they lack warrant, not deontological justification.

The other way Plantinga mentions that a belief could fail to attain deontological justification is if one is culpably convinced of the truth of a proposition. But the question of whether or not someone is culpably convinced of the truth of a proposition reduces to a question about whether that person is deontologically justified in believing the proposition, since culpability just *is* blameworthiness, and whether or not one is deontologically justified is a matter of whether one's belief is praiseworthy or blameworthy. If one is deontologically justified in believing a proposition because one is

not blameworthy or subject to censure or disapprobation for believing the proposition, then it follows trivially that one believes the proposition nonculpably. The question then is: how is one deontologically justified? Plantinga rejects Chisholm's idea that deontological justification is a matter of trying one's best – of exerting effort – to believe only true propositions. He rejects the classical deontologist's suggestion that one is deontologically justified by fulfilling a duty to believe only propositions that are supported by adequate evidence. He suggests instead that one is deontologically justified in believing what seems to be true.

Despite the two possible conditions in which a belief would fail to be deontologically justified, Plantinga's account continues to imply that all of the beliefs that a person actually holds are deontologically justified. In situations where defeating conditions obtain, continuing to hold a belief is a sign of cognitive malfunction rather than of a lack of deontological justification. And holding a belief nonculpably just is deontological justification; and according to Plantinga, one is deontologically justified in believing what seems to be true. Since he thinks that people believe only what seems to them to be true, it turns out, given his understanding of deontological justification, that persons can only hold justified beliefs.

While the question of whether or not deontological justification is necessary or sufficient for warrant is an important question, there is another important issue at stake: does Plantinga supply us with a satisfactory account of justification. He thinks that deontological justification is justification in its most basic and naturally understood form. But then his account of justification is implausible, since he seems to exclude the possibility of actually committing a violation. As has been argued, on Plantinga's

account, it turns out that beliefs cannot be anything but justified, rendering justification entirely superfluous. This is highly counterintuitive. If one's assumptions entail that just any belief can be justified, then there must be something wrong with one or more of the assumptions.

Given Plantinga's account of impulsional evidence, we are in a similar position if we understand justification evidentially. Plantinga thinks that the evidentialist is forced into a position where ne has to admit impulsional evidence as a form of justifying evidence, since he takes it to be the only form of evidence supporting many instances of knowledge. But if all beliefs have impulsional evidence, then any proposition is supported by impulsional evidence just in case we believe it. As a result, all beliefs are trivially justified. Again, this account of justification is both implausible and unhelpful.

I take the main problem to be the result of his views on 'impulsional evidence' – he thinks that all beliefs that are actually held have impulsional evidence which gives them a felt attractiveness that makes them seem to be true. Thus, I shall now turn my attention to an analysis of Plantinga's view of impulsional evidence, which I take to be faulty. If I am correct, then it is not the case that all beliefs are trivially justified. Furthermore, through the following analysis, I hope to show that deontology is on the wrong track when trying to account for justification. I will go on to argue that the justificatory status of a belief does not essentially turn on matters pertaining to deontological concepts. Rather, I shall join Conee and Feldman in arguing that justification turns entirely on matters pertaining to the quality of evidence in favour of a belief. Thus, I judge matters of praise and blame to be epistemically insignificant when

justification is at issue. The important questions that will remain for justification – conceived of in evidentialist terms – is whether or not it is necessary.

B. Impulsional Evidence

Plantinga's analysis of impulsional evidence seems problematic. If it is correct, then not only are all beliefs deontologically justified, they are also evidentially justified – the impulsional evidence will automatically support them. Thus, any attempt to rescue justification – that is, any attempt to show that justification is an important concept – will need to address Plantinga's explication of 'impulsional evidence'. Recall Plantinga's statement that: "It isn't even possible that you believe *p* but lack impulsional evidence for it: how could it be that you believe *p* although *p* doesn't seem to you to be true?".[76] This would be the case if "impulsional evidence is no more than the phenomenal reflection of the fact that you do indeed believe the proposition in question"[77].

On Plantinga's construal of it, any belief that a person holds will satisfy the condition of having impulsional evidence. The assumption seems to be that people do not hold beliefs that lack a sense of rightness, appropriateness or felt attractiveness: they believe only what seems to them to be true. If a proposition seems weird, absurd, or eminently rejectable, it will be rejected rather than believed. But it does not seem to be the case that all beliefs are accompanied by the phenomenal properties associated with impulsional evidence.[78] Furthermore, it is plausible to say that many beliefs that are accompanied by the phenomenology associated with impulsional evidence come to be so associated after the belief has acquired justification via evidence of some other kind.

---

[76]Plantinga, "Respondo," 360

[77] Plantinga, "Respondo," 360

[78] Conee and Feldman argue for a this conclusion in "Internalism Defended"

For example, it is reasonable to suppose that at least some philosophy students have come to agree with David Lewis' position regarding the reality of possible worlds despite having an aversion towards the belief. Since Lewis is an extremely clever philosopher, and has produced strong arguments in favour of his position, it is plausible to suppose that he has convinced some for whom modal realism seems weird, absurd, and eminently rejectable.

Consider a hypothetical third year undergraduate, Sam, who initially finds modal realism weird, absurd, and eminently rejectable. Upon reading Lewis' arguments for modal realism, Sam searches for flaws in Lewis' reasoning, desperately wanting to find some, because modal realism seems so surprising and implausible. However, Sam finds no flaws; the arguments are, as far as Sam can detect, sound, valid, and generally airtight. Given that Sam has a great respect for the power of philosophical argument, believing that sound and valid arguments lead inevitably to the truth, Sam grudgingly concedes that Lewis is correct, and that modal realism must be true. All the while, Sam feels forced into believing something weird, absurd, and eminently rejectable.

One could argue that if Sam continues to find modal realism weird, absurd, and eminently rejectable, he does not really believe it, even though he may think that he does. Perhaps he only thinks that it is possibly true, and is confusing that state with a state of belief. Maybe he only believes that Lewis has provided good arguments in favour of an unbelievable position, thus he ought to believe. But Sam's impulsional evidence continues to override the propositional evidence, thus not allowing him to ever really acquire the belief that modal realism represents the truth of the matter regarding the

existence of possible worlds. In this case, Sam would not really believe until the impulsional evidence changes: until it is in favour of the belief.

However, it seems *ad hoc* to say that Sam does not really believe that modal realism is true, even though he thinks that he does. Rather, Sam comes to distrust the impulsional evidence since he has been given reason to be suspicious of it. He believes that continuing to insist that modal realism is false on the basis of impulsional evidence (even though, perhaps, he does not call it impulsional evidence) would be indicative of sheer stubbornness. He believes that the impulsional evidence is not leading him to the truth, so the arguments cause him to believe in spite of the impulsional evidence. He thinks it quite clear that impulsional evidence is not enough – he must look, in this case, to the propositional evidence.

If the above analysis is correct, then impulsional evidence does not necessarily accompany each belief that a person actually holds. One can think of a number of cases where people sensibly hold highly counterintuitive beliefs on the basis of evidence that conflicts with impulsional evidence. For example, highly counterintuitive beliefs regarding the activity of sub-atomic particles are held by many people on the basis of testimonial evidence from quantum physicists. Thus, it does seem possible to believe propositions that seem weird, strange, and eminently rejectable.

So, impulsional evidence does not seem to necessarily accompany belief. Thus, impulsional evidence cannot do the job that Plantinga thinks it can; it does not make it the case that all actually held beliefs are trivially justified by the evidence, even if one counts 'impulsional evidence' as a form of evidence. This conclusion runs counter to Plantinga's statement regarding how impulsional evidence trivially justifies all beliefs: "So the

proposition that *S*'s belief that *p* fits *S*'s evidence, on this construal of 'evidence', is satisfied by *S*'s merely believing *p*".[79] Plantinga contends that since a person has impulsional evidence for all beliefs that are actually held, it trivially follows that all beliefs are evidentially justified, since they are supported by that person's evidence. As we have seen, given Plantinga's view that one is deontologically justified in believing what seems to be true, all of the beliefs that a person actually holds also turn out to be deontologically justified. By establishing that not all beliefs have impulsional evidence in their favour, we can reach the conclusion that not all beliefs are trivially justified.

But should impulsional evidence – this seeming to be true – be considered evidence at all? One reason for classifying it as evidence would be that in ordinary situations, much of our knowledge is accompanied by a high degree of impulsional evidence. Conversely, many of the propositions that we know to be false seem weird, strange, and eminently rejectable. This makes sense if we consider that, if the cognitive design plan is a good one, our faculties should equip us with mostly true beliefs in ordinary situations. Assuming that our cognitive design plan in a good one, if our faculties are functioning properly in normal circumstances, beliefs about what we perceive, beliefs about simple logical and mathematical truths, and beliefs about the recent past are very likely to be true. And these are precisely the kinds of beliefs that are accompanied by a high degree of impulsional evidence – we have a strong felt inclination to believe them. If this is correct, then for a significant range of doxastic situations, our faculties produce a strong felt inclination in us to believe propositions that are likely to be true. Thus, we can suppose that when our faculties are functioning properly, there will be a positive correlation between the amount of impulsional evidence that we have when we

[79] Plantinga, "Respondo," 360

consider a proposition, and the likelihood of that proposition being true. If this is correct, then in ordinary situations, the propositions that are most likely to be true are the one's that seem to us to be true. So, in many cases, impulsional evidence provides us with a *prima facie* reason to hold a belief. It provides us with only a *prima facie* reason because, as we have seen in Sam's case, one can acquire reasons to believe counter to the impulsional evidence. In Sam's case, he comes to distrust his impulsional evidence, since Lewis' arguments give him a reason to believe a proposition that is not supported by impulsional evidence, and not to believe one that is. In Sam's case, and in other difficult cases, impulsional evidence does not seem to be trustworthy since there are reasons to think that does not reliably points us towards the truth.

If we think of what Plantinga's theory of warrant may have to say about cases such as Sam's, and other cases where a consideration of difficult matters such as quantum mechanics results in the affirmation of propositions that seem weird and absurd, he may say that while our faculties readily furnish us with warranted beliefs in a wide range of circumstances, our cognitive faculties are not as readily equipped to reliably furnish us with true beliefs when we consider matters such as the metaphysics of modality or quantum mechanics. In considering these difficult matters, we stretch and often go beyond the limits of our cognitive capacities. However, for a vast amount of epistemic terrain, when our cognitive faculties are able to produce a warranted belief in us, belief can simply be trusted. In these cases, warranted beliefs are automatically accompanied by though not formed on the basis of impulsional evidence. Thus, in ordinary circumstances (and these are the circumstances in which our cognitive faculties are designed to operate), when our cognitive faculties are functioning properly the propositions that are most likely

to be true are the ones that seem to us to be true – the one's that are accompanied by impulsional evidence.

Much seems correct about the above response. We simply find ourselves believing things about what we perceive, remember, and judge others to be feeling; and we happen to find ourselves with strong impulsional evidence for these beliefs. In ordinary circumstances, we take it that these beliefs constitute knowledge. In these cases, we seem to simply form warranted beliefs apart from any need for justification. In contrast, issues such as modal realism and quantum mechanics stretch our cognitive capacities to, and perhaps beyond their limits. So, in those cases, we search for evidence to support our beliefs, since our naturally arising beliefs about these issues cannot be trusted as readily as beliefs such as our ordinary perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, and beliefs about simple logical and mathematical truths. This theory implies that for a vast number of our beliefs, our naturally arising beliefs can simply be trusted, and additional evidential support is not necessary for warrant. But there are also cases in which our cognitive faculties do not seem equipped to furnish us with warranted beliefs. In these difficult cases, evidential justification is necessary (though not sufficient) for warrant; but this in no way would imply that evidential justification is necessary for warrant as a general condition.

In the next section, I shall take up the question of whether evidential justification is necessary for warrant. But what about deontological justification? In the example, where Sam comes to believe that modal realism is true, it seems uncontentious to say that Sam's belief is justified; both deontologically and evidentially. While his original belief fits his impulsional evidence, his impulsional evidence is only *prima facie*, and the

propositional evidence (evidence consisting of propositions that are believed) functions as a defeater. Thus if Sam fails to alter his belief, he then fails to be evidentially justified – his belief no longer fits his evidence. In this case, given Sam's evidence, the proposition "modal realism is true" is evidentially justified for Sam. (Or, at the very least, the proposition "modal realism is false" fails to be evidentially justified. For the sake of simplicity, I will suppose that belief in either the truth or falsity of modal realism is justified for Sam.) As it turns out, his appropriately altered belief is both deontologically and evidentially justified. By altering his belief to fit the evidence, Sam acts with perfect epistemic propriety.

Suppose, as in the above example, that Sam considers Lewis' arguments in favour of modal realism and cannot find any flaws in them; they seem to him to be sound and valid, thus entailing that, contrary to his belief, modal realism is true. However, unlike in the above example, Sam is unable to alter his belief, and thus continues to believe the proposition "modal realism is false" with unwavering firmness. (Add that the irresistibility of impulsional evidence is not the reason he cannot help but believe – suppose, much to his chagrin, he also finds himself unable to avoid believing some propositions that he finds repulsive). Since he has good reason to think that modal realism is true, can he be blamed for thinking that it is false? It is difficult to see how he could be blamed. He has done all that he can; he has considered the evidence, the evidence points to the falsity of his belief, but he still cannot help but believe. In such a case, surely he is deontologically justified. He may be by suffering from cognitive dysfunction, but he cannot reasonably be blamed for holding his belief.

In the above scenario, it seems right to say that Sam is deontologically justified, since he is not properly subject to blame. He has considered the evidence carefully, so it is difficult to see how he could be expected to do more than he has already done. According to deontological standards, he is justified in his belief although he has tried but failed to believe the proposition that is evidentially supported: his justification is the result of his trying. However, there seems to be something wrong with a conception of justification that allows one to say that he is justified in believing despite having evidence for the falsity of his belief. Here, Conee and Feldman's suggestion seems plausible: the proposition that Sam is justified in believing is the one that actually fits the evidence.[80] The proposition that Sam is justified in believing is the one that fits his evidence, whether he is capable of believing it or not. According to Conee and Feldman's evidentialist account, while Sam is not properly subject to blame, he fails to be justified. I take this to be a plausible conclusion. The set of beliefs that count as justified on this evidentialist conception of justification excludes many beliefs that the deontologist is forced to include, and the beliefs that are excluded are the kinds of beliefs that we would typically count as unjustified: beliefs that fail to fit the evidence.

Suppose, on the other hand, that Sam fails to believe that modal realism is true, despite being able to give and withhold assent at will. All goes just as in the original example in that he has impulsional evidence for the proposition "modal realism is false", and then acquires strong propositional evidence for the proposition "modal realism is true". In this scenario, Sam does not want to believe that modal realism is true, so he withholds assent and continues to affirm his original belief. Suppose that Sam refuses to revise his belief because he had scoffed at Lewis' supporters, and he is too proud to

[80] Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," 20

change his mind and agree with them. This refusal to change his mind is indicative of Sam's stubborn streak. In the present case, his belief that modal realism is false will lack both deontological justification and evidential justification. It will lack deontological justification because his refusal to go with his evidence is blameworthy; he could go with his evidence, but he is too stubborn to do so. If he were to change his mind, his belief would be both deontologically justified and evidentially justified; he could be praised for following his epistemic duty to follow the evidence.

At this point, it becomes difficult to see how the deontological concepts of praise-worthiness, blame-worthiness, and observance of duty are relevant to the justificatory status of his belief. His stubbornness may be a moral fault, but it has little epistemic significance. Rather, it is most plausible to say that he is unjustified if he continues to believe that modal realism is false because his belief does not fit his evidence. The question of which belief fits the evidence is of much more epistemic interest than the question of whether a person is praiseworthy or blameworthy in holding a belief. By reflecting on the above scenarios, we can see that the justificatory status of Sam's beliefs is a product of whether or not he believes in accordance with the evidence. Issues regarding praise, blame, and observance of duty, though perhaps important in other respects, seem extraneous where justification is at issue.

The important question that must now be addressed is that of whether justification, understood in evidentialist terms, is necessary for warrant: Plantinga thinks that it is not. Therefore, we shall now turn our attention to that question – the question of whether all beliefs require evidential justification if they are to be rightly counted as knowledge.

C. Is evidence Necessary for Knowledge?

While Plantinga's claim that much of our knowledge is not based upon evidence is plausible, it is not clear how it defeats evidentialism, especially given his understanding of evidentialism as "a special variety of foundationalism that stands in an interesting relation to modern classical foundationalism"[81]. If one is a foundationalist, one will think only that non-basic beliefs require an evidential basis. However, one can still be an evidentialist in the sense of thinking that matters of justification turn entirely on issues related to evidence, and that one's beliefs need to fit the evidence that one has.

Plantinga is a foundationalist, as he explicitly states: "foundationalism is the truth of the matter".[82] According to foundationalism, a noetic structure consists of basic and non-basic beliefs. Non-basic beliefs are believed on the basis of other beliefs, and this basing relation terminates with the basic beliefs. Various forms of foundationalism differ in the criteria they employ for determining which beliefs are properly basic. Classical foundationalism, which has been a hugely influential variety of foundationalism, puts forth what have been the most commonly accepted sets of criteria. Plantinga distinguishes between ancient classical foundationalists such as Aristotle and Aquinas who hold that properly basic beliefs are those that are self-evident, evident to the senses, or incorrigible, and modern classical foundationalists who follow Descartes and Locke in limiting the scope of properly basic beliefs to beliefs that are self-evident or about one's own mental life.[83] Plantinga sees the classical foundationalist constraints on how to distinguish basic beliefs as too stringent, entailing that very few of our beliefs are justified. Furthermore, he thinks that classical foundationalism is self-referentially

---

[81] Plantinga, "*Warrant and Proper Function*," 177
[82] Plantinga, "*Warrant and Proper Function*," 182
[83] Plantinga, "*Warrant: The Current Debate*," 68

incoherent, since the tenets of classical foundationalism are neither properly basic according to its own standards, nor do they appear to be supported propositions that meet these standards.[84] So Plantinga rejects classical foundationalism and instead endorses what he calls 'Reidian Foundationalism', which is much more relaxed in its constraints regarding which beliefs can be properly counted as basic:

> I've already argued that many kinds of beliefs can be properly basic, in addition to those that the classical foundationalist countenances: for example, perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, beliefs about the mental states of other persons, inductive beliefs, and testimonial beliefs.[85]

In his refutation of evidentialism, the instances of knowledge that are not based on evidence that he cites are examples of what he claims are basic beliefs. Basic beliefs are basic because one does not come to believe them on the basis of evidence. In his examples that are intended to refute evidentialism by demonstrating that not all beliefs that count as knowledge are formed on the basis of evidence, Plantinga includes memory beliefs. He claims that memory beliefs can constitute knowledge, even in cases where they are not formed on the basis of any evidence.[86] However, since he argues that memory beliefs are basic, according to foundationalism of any stripe, they need not be held on the basis of evidence:

Many foundationalists may dispute whether all of the species of belief Plantinga admits as basic should be included in a list of basic beliefs. However, if the beliefs are basic, then foundationalists would agree that they are not, nor should they be, formed on the basis of evidence. Rather than being in need of an evidential basis, these basic beliefs serve as part of the evidence base for one's non-basic beliefs. The controversy that arises

---

[84] Plantinga, "*Warrant: The Current Debate*," 85
[85] Plantinga, " *Warrant and Proper Function*," 183
[86] Plantinga, "*Warrant and Proper Function*," 188

among foundationalists will be in regard to whether or not it is permissible to allow memory beliefs into the stock of what counts as basic. There are, of course, many other questions about foundationalism to be answered, such as questions regarding the mechanics of the basing relation and questions of how an experience can justify a proposition. But various answers to these questions may be compatible with a form of evidentialism that prescribes only that all non-basic beliefs are in need of an evidential basis.

Furthermore, while the inclusion of memory as a basic belief may be problematic for many foundationalists, many *a priori* beliefs, such as belief in the validity of *modus ponens*, are not. Plantinga uses the example of one's entertaining an instance of *modus ponens* to illustrate how one can form *a priori* beliefs apart from evidence. However, *modus ponens* is a good example of something that classical foundationalists would take as properly basic on the grounds that it is self-evident. For example, Bertrand Russell, who places a high value on believing on the basis of evidence, makes the following comment regarding the inclusion of *modus ponens* as a first principle:

> If any one asks: 'Why should I accept the results of valid arguments based on true premises?' we can only answer by appealing to our principle. In fact, the truth of the principle is impossible to doubt, and its obviousness is so great that at first sight it seems almost trivial.[87]

One would be hard pressed to find a foundationalist who would argue that when one entertains an instance of *modus ponens*, one must form the '*modus ponens* belief' on the basis of evidence. But one is also hard pressed to see how this is a problem for an evidential requirement in the context of foundationalism, since the evidential requirement does not apply here.

---

[87] Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) 40

If Plantinga is correct in his judgement that evidentialism is a variety of foundationalism, whether or not evidentialism is mistaken then seems to depend on just what the evidentialist is claiming. If the evidentialist claims that *all* beliefs – including self-evident beliefs such as beliefs formed when entertaining instances of *modus ponens* – must be formed on the basis of evidence, then evidentialism or foundationalism is mistaken. If evidentialism requires that all beliefs be formed on the basis of evidence, then evidentialism would not be a variety of foundationalism at all, and if true, it would show that foundationalism must be false. Evidentialism that requires that *all* beliefs be formed on the basis of evidence certainly has little in common with classical foundationalism, and thus Plantinga's claim that evidentialism is a variety of foundationalism that stands in a special relation to modern classical foundationalism would be false. If an evidentialist is making only the limited claim that all non-basic beliefs should be formed on the basis of evidence, then evidentialism can co-exist comfortably with foundationalism. In fact, if the evidentialist is making the limited claim, then there seems to be little for Plantinga to object to. The differences that arise would be regarding which beliefs can be admitted as basic.

Plantinga's quarrel with the evidentialist turns on the idea that many beliefs that are clearly knowledge are not *formed on the basis* of evidence. However, the evidentialist's essential claim does not seem to be that all justified beliefs must be *formed on the basis* of evidence. Rather, the claim is that a belief is justified if it *fits* the evidence. Conee and Feldman state the following evidentialist definition of epistemic justification:

> Doxastic attitude *D* toward proposition *p* is epistemically justified for *S* at *t* if and only if having *D* toward p fits the evidence *S* has at *t*.[88]

According to the above definition of epistemic justification (EJ), justification is a matter of a belief's fitting the evidence, and it says nothing about having to form beliefs on the basis of evidence. This interpretation is supported by their reply to Plantinga's objection that simple mathematical truths, like memory beliefs and *modus ponens* beliefs, lack evidential support. They speak about our success in dealing with arithmetical matters, the assent that our assertions about these matters enjoy, the fact we have been given no reason to think our beliefs false, and a kind of *a priori* insight that enables us to grasp mathematical truths. Thus, they conclude that it is highly implausible to say that the only evidence for the truth of simple mathematical propositions is impulses.[89] However, in this reply, they say nothing about how the belief is formed – whether or not it is formed on the basis of the evidence mentioned above, or any other evidence. Rather, they claim only that the belief is justified if it *fits* the evidence.

When justification is at issue, Conee and Feldman do not seem concerned about how a belief is formed – whether or not it was formed on the basis of evidence – but rather with whether or not there are reasons to continue holding the belief. This includes a concern about whether there are reasons to think the belief false. If there are clear reasons to think a belief is false, then the belief does not fit the evidence.

In holding these concerns about whether beliefs fit the evidence, Conee and Feldman are proposing a reasonable requirement for knowledge. We cannot know a proposition if we have sufficient evidence (putting aside for a moment the question of what counts as sufficient) for the proposition's falsehood – even if it is accompanied by a

---

[88] Feldman and Conee, "Evidentialism," 15
[89] Conee and Feldman, "Internalism Defended," 7

high degree of impulsional evidence. We cannot know such propositions because we are not justified in believing them. And it seems reasonable to expect that any proposition that we can know will likely have more evidence in its favour than only impulsional evidence. If even the simplest of mathematical truths lacked the kind of evidential support that Conee and Feldman describe, we would surely be hard pressed to count them as items of knowledge. (It is interesting to note that it is difficult to imagine simple mathematical truths lacking the kind of evidence Conee and Feldman describe).

This requirement for justification – that a belief fits the evidence – has the desirable result that beliefs such as paranoid beliefs and beliefs about rotational reproduction will often turn out to be unjustified. The believer in rotational reproduction, like the paranoid person, may have little or no evidence apart from impulsional evidence; and he would likely have plenty of counter-evidence. In the case of paranoia, a person may be well aware that there is no good evidence to support the paranoid beliefs, and that there are reasons not to be paranoid. Nevertheless, the paranoid beliefs may persist. In the 'rotational reproduction' example, it is difficult to imagine that the person holding such a belief does not have plenty of counter-evidence. It is most likely that he believes despite the counter-evidence, since he has a great deal of impulsional evidence for his rotational reproduction belief. In such a case, the belief fails to fit the evidence that the person has. People may not be blameworthy in holding delusional beliefs such as paranoid belief, or rotational reproduction beliefs. However, the beliefs are, nevertheless, unjustified if they do not fit the evidence. So the evidentialist can, unlike Plantinga, make the intuitively plausible claim that 'rotational reproduction' beliefs are not justified if they fail to fit the

evidence (and they likely do not fit the evidence), even if the person holding them is blameless.[90]

While it will likely be the case that delusional beliefs tend not to be justified, there may be situations in which they are. Recall Plantinga's example in which he forms the delusional belief that he will be the next president of the United States. Suppose that he informs his friends of his ambition, and in an effort avoid hurting his feelings, they avoid saying anything to discourage him. Yet others, in an attempt to be comical, assure him that he will certainly win the presidency. Furthermore, a defence mechanism has blocked his unsuccessful bid for the presidency of his sophomore class from his memory. In these circumstances, it seems plausible to say that his delusional belief will fit his evidence, and will thus be justified. But clearly, his belief lacks warrant. His belief lacks warrant due to the way in which it was produced: it is produced by means of a cognitive malfunction. Thus, we can see that justification is not sufficient for warrant. Even if it is justified, a belief lacks warrant if it is not produced in an appropriate fashion.

In the above example we can see that warrant is a product of how a belief is produced, and justification is dependant on whether a belief fits the available evidence. Thus, Plantinga's theory of warrant functions as of a theory of 'well-foundedness' rather than a theory of justification. Conee and Feldman explain that: "The term 'well-founded' is sometimes used to characterize an attitude that is epistemically both well-supported and properly arrived at".[91] They propose 'WF' as their account of 'well-foundedness':

> S's doxastic attitude *D* at *t* toward proposition *p* is well-founded if and only if
> (i) having *D* toward *p* is justified for s at *t*; and
> (ii) *S* has *D* toward *p* on the basis of some body of evidence *e*, such that
> (a) *S* has *e* as evidence at *t*;

[90] Feldman does claim this in "Plantinga, Warrant, and Gettier," 206
[91] Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," 24

(b) having *D* toward *p* fits *e*; and
(c) there is no more inclusive body of evidence *e'* had by *S* at *t* such that having *B* toward p does not fit *e'*.[92]

WF prescribes that beliefs merit the favourable appraisal of 'well-foundedness' if they are justified and if they are held on the basis of an appropriate body of evidence. In addition to just being ***held*** on the basis of appropriate evidence, Conee and Feldman seem to want to say that well-founded beliefs are ***arrived at*** on the basis of evidence. This conclusion is inferred from their statement immediately preceding their presentation of WF, that, in addition to justification, 'well-foundedness' is concerned with how beliefs are arrived at. This is quite a different concept than EJ, which states only that a belief must fit the evidence. They propose WF as an alternative to reliabilism, which Conee and Feldman take to be a theory of well-foundedness rather than a theory of justification.

Conee and Feldman make it quite clear that WF attempts to capture something quite different from epistemic justification. WF, like Plantinga's theory of warrant, is an appraisal that evaluates the epistemic status of a belief based on the way that a belief is arrived at. While EJ is a plausible definition of epistemic justification, there is good reason to prefer Plantinga's theory of warrant rather than WF as an account of 'well-foundedness'.

The examples that Plantinga cites to refute evidentialism are illuminating for allowing us to see why Plantinga's theory provides an account of 'well-foundedness' that is superior to WF. Plantinga argues that his belief that he saw his friend Paul a year earlier in California is not formed on the basis of evidence. He argues that many *a priori* beliefs are not formed on the basis of evidence either. If these indeed are instances of beliefs that are not formed on the basis of evidence, then they show that the extension of

[92] Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," 24

WF does not include beliefs such as memory beliefs and many *a priori* beliefs, such as where one gives assent to instances of *modus ponens*. WF prescribes that well-founded beliefs are arrived at on the basis of evidence. But it seems plausible to suppose that the beliefs Plantinga cites are often not formed on the basis of evidence. A merit of Plantinga's theory is that it provides a plausible account of how these beliefs are arrived at: reliable, truth-aimed cognitive faculties produce them, and they are well-founded if these faculties are functioning properly in the appropriate environment. This is a merit because, according to Plantinga's theory, these beliefs are well-founded, even if they are not formed on the basis of evidence – even if evidence plays no role whatsoever in how one arrives at these beliefs. Since it is plausible to suppose that there are instances of knowledge that are not arrived at on the basis of evidence, and Plantinga's theory is consistent with this possibility, Plantinga's theory is preferable to WF for explaining well-foundedness.

The rejection of WF as a theory of well-foundedness does not, however, entail that evidentialism ought to be rejected as a theory of epistemic justification. Rather, the failure of WF simply shows the limitations of evidentialism. Evidentialism only provides an adequate account of justification; and when justification is defined in evidentialist terms by EJ, justification is necessary for warrant. In other words, if a belief does not fit the evidence one possesses – evidence to which, in principle, one has access upon reflection or introspection – that belief fails to be an item of knowledge. For example, if we consider memory beliefs, we can see that they can constitute knowledge only if they fit the evidence. In the case of a particular memory belief, if I seem to remember something but have good reason to believe that I the event I am remembering could not

have happened, my belief is unjustified because it does not fit my evidence. In such a case, it seems right to say that failing to fit the evidence disqualifies the belief from being counted as knowledge. Or, if I have reason to think that, say, my short term memory is unreliable or is subject to a malfunction (perhaps I have had a concussion recently), then perhaps none of my short term memory beliefs are justified unless they have corroborating evidence to support them (e.g. someone else's testimony, documentation that supports my belief). Without this corroborating evidence, my belief does not fit my evidence. Here again, it seems right to say that my memory beliefs do not constitute knowledge unless they fit my evidence. If, on the other hand, I have good reason to think that my memory is reliable, and I find myself with a memory belief, then my belief fits my evidence. In such cases, I am justified in believing; and in these cases it seems right to say that if they are true and well-founded, my memory beliefs constitute knowledge.

This supports the idea that I need some kind of evidence besides impulsional evidence. In the above case, I recognize the belief as a memory belief, and it seems plausible to suppose that we can have plenty of evidence in favour of memory itself. Then, if I recognize a belief as a memory belief, I have evidence in favour of memory, and I have no reason to think that a particular memory belief is false, then my belief fits my evidence. A justified memory belief fits my evidence, even if it is not initially arrived at on the basis of this evidence -- even if I just find myself with a belief that has the phenomenology characteristic of memory beliefs. If, on the other hand, I find myself with a belief that appears to have just popped into my head, and I cannot recognize it as, say, a memory belief, perceptual belief, or any other identifiable species of belief, then it is difficult to see how the belief can be justified -- even it is accompanied by strong

impulsional evidence. Thus, if for no apparent reason I find myself with the belief that Chicago was populated by rotational reproduction, then my belief is not justified.

The above analysis points to the necessity of EJ as a condition of warrant. Beliefs that fail to fit the evidence do not appear to be instances of knowledge; rather, their lack of justification seems to disqualify them. If, however, a belief is justified, then whether or not it is an item of knowledge depends on whether it is true and well-founded. If, I somehow acquire a great deal of evidence that Chicago was in fact populated by rotational reproduction, I then hold a justified belief that fails to be warranted. My rotational reproduction belief will lack warrant because it is a product of cognitive malfunction. I thus conclude that epistemic justification, as prescribed by EJ, is necessary, though not sufficient for warrant -- for distinguishing true belief from knowledge. In addition to being justified, a belief must be well founded. And a belief is well-founded if it meets Plantinga's conditions for warrant – if it is produced by a properly functioning cognitive faculty, successfully aimed at the production of true beliefs, operating in a congenial epistemic environment. If a belief is true, justified, and well-founded, then it constitutes knowledge.

Conclusion

Plantinga contends that internalist theories of justification are entirely on the wrong track in attempting to account for warrant – the property that differentiates knowledge from true belief. I agree that deontological theories are entirely on the wrong track. While deontological principles may be important in other ways, epistemic deontology provides neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for knowledge. Furthermore, deontology does not provide us with a satisfactory account of epistemic justification. I have argued that a purely evidentialist account of epistemic justification better captures our epistemic intuitions.

While I agree with Plantinga that deontology cannot account for warrant, I disagree with his assessment that evidentialism should be discarded as well. I have argued that knowledge is *at least* evidentially justified true belief. I argue that fitting the evidence is a necessary condition for warrant. But more is required for a complete analysis. Plantinga's theory of warrant goes a good distance towards providing that analysis. His numerous thought-provoking and engaging examples do a great deal to show that proper function is an important aspect of warrant.

Plantinga's theory is a version of reliabilism, but it has advantages over its theoretical cousins. If warrant is only a matter of a process or faculty reliably producing true beliefs, then a belief will be warranted if it is produced by a process that is accidentally reliable. Proper function provides a way of dealing with problems caused by accidental reliability, by prescribing that the faculty that produces the belief must be functioning properly. The teleology that is built into the theory also allows us to

individuate faculties according to their purpose. This goes some distance in alleviating problems that are common to reliabilist theories.

I do not claim that Plantinga's theory is problem-free, or that I have actually solved any of the problems that it may face. Rather, I take it that Plantinga's theory shows great promise, and, based on my judgement that it has great promise for providing epistemologists with a framework for dealing with some perennial problems in epistemology, I claim that it, or something very much like it, likely represents the truth of the matter. The importance of a congenial cognitive environment sheds an interesting light on Gettier problems. And his theory does an admirable job of accounting for our common-sense intuitions about our ability to have knowledge of other minds, inductive knowledge, and *a priori* knowledge, although we often do not arrive at these beliefs on the basis of evidence, and it is often difficult to find evidence by which to arrive at these beliefs. His theory involves the idea that we have cognitive faculties that are designed to produce these kinds of beliefs in us – and when these faculties are functioning properly, in the environment for which they were designed, we have knowledge.

I add an additional condition: that our beliefs *fit* our evidence; that they be evidentially justified. According to Plantinga's account, the kinds of beliefs listed above are basic, since they are not arrived at on the basis of evidence; they are not the conclusion of an inferential process; we do not use a reasoning process to arrive at them. Rather, our faculties produce them as outputs when given the appropriate input. While I agree with him, I also think that there is good reason to think that once we have these beliefs, they constitute knowledge only if they fit our evidence. Evidential justification is not sufficient for warrant, since there may be many evidentially justified beliefs that lack

warrant. However, it seems to me to be reasonable to say that all warranted beliefs are evidentially justified. In fact, believing a proposition that does not fit any evidence apart from impulsional evidence may very well be a symptom of cognitive malfunction. If this is true, then perhaps a happy marriage between evidentialism, excluding WF, and Plantinga's theory of warrant is possible.

If I am correct in thinking that evidential justification is a necessary condition for warrant, even in the context of a proper functionalist theory of warrant, then there is a sense in which the evidential requirement, while conceptually distinct from warrant, is superfluous with respect to warrant. If the design plan specifies that a well-formed noetic structure should contain only beliefs that fit the evidence available to the person who holds them, then the evidentialist requirement seems to add nothing to the theory – in a sense, it hardly seems worth mentioning. It will just turn out that an interesting feature of a well-formed noetic structure is that it contains only beliefs that fit the person's evidence. If I am correct, then beliefs are evidentially justified by virtue of their being warranted, and this does not require anything over and above what is already contained in Plantinga's theory of warrant.

What evidential justification adds is of pragmatic value. The requirement that our beliefs fit the evidence allows us to assess and modify our beliefs. Thus, the evidentialist criterion for justification can provide a guide for one's 'belief maintenance'. Plantinga's theory already includes the 'defeater system' that goes some distance towards allowing us to assess and, perhaps, modify our beliefs. It is obviously the case that if we have a defeater for a belief, the defeated belief will not fit our evidence. However, Plantinga's theory allows for belief in the absence of any evidence besides impulsional evidence, as

long as there are no defeaters present. But one may hold epistemically substandard beliefs, such as paranoid beliefs, without having any defeaters for those beliefs (in order for a belief to function as a defeater, it must be believed; paranoia may render a person incapable of forming beliefs that defeat the paranoid beliefs). The evidentialist condition that I propose includes the positive requirement that there must be at least some evidence apart from impulsional evidence in favour of a belief.

As has already been argued, all of the beliefs that Plantinga raises as examples of beliefs that are held without any evidence in there favour – memory beliefs, simple mathematical truths, *modus ponens* – do in fact have plenty of evidence in their favour. For example, in the case of memory, one can recognize a belief as a memory belief, and one may have evidence in favour of the reliability of memory. In the case of memory, one may then say that if a belief of this sort seems to be true, then I am justified in believing it. Here, impulsional evidence does seem to have some evidential value. If, on the other hand, I come to hold beliefs such as paranoid beliefs and rotational reproduction beliefs and these beliefs cannot be identified as a species of belief that has evidence in its favour, then the only evidence these beliefs fit is the impulsional evidence. In such cases, beliefs will not be justified; impulsional evidence alone is not sufficient for justification. If a belief fails to be justified, then it seems reasonable to conclude that it cannot be an item of knowledge. Thus, while evidential justification cannot provide us with the means for conclusively establishing that a belief has warrant, the evidential requirement that I propose – that a belief can be an item of knowledge only if it fits the evidence – provides us with a criterion for evaluating beliefs according to an accessible, significant, and epistemically indispensable standard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alston, William "An Internalist Externalism" *Synthese* 74 (1988) 265-283

Alston, William. "The Deontological Conception of Epistemic Justification," *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988) 257-299.

Audi, Robert. *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

BonJour, Lawrence. "Externalism/Internalism," Dancy and Sosa, 132-136.

Chisholm, Roderick. *Theory of Knowledge* 2nd edition. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1977.

Conee, Earl and Feldman, Richard. "Evidentialism," *Philosophical Studies* 48 (1985) 15-34.

Conee, Earl and Feldman, Richard. "Internalism Defended," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 38 (2001) 1-18

Dancy, Jonathan and Sosa, Ernest (eds.). *A Companion to Epistemology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. (tr. John Veitch) in *The Rationalists*. New York: Doubleday, 1960.

Feldman, Richard. "Plantinga, Gettier, and Warrant," Kvanvig, 199-220

Fumerton, Richard. "The Internalism/Externalism Controversy," *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 (1988) 443-459.

Gettier, Edmund. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963) 121-123

Goldman, Alvin. "Internalism Exposed," *The Journal of Philosophy* 96 (1999) 271-293

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. New York: Dover, 1959.

Kvanvig, Jonathan L. (ed.) *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology: Essays in Honor of Plantinga's Theory of Knowledge*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

Plantinga, Alvin. "Reason an Belief in God," *Faith and Rationality*. (ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff) Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983.

Plantinga, Alvin. "Reliabilism, Analyses, and Defeaters," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55 (1995) 427-464

Plantinga, Alvin. "Respondo," Kvanvig, 307-378.

Plantinga, Alvin. "The Foundations of Theism: A Reply, " *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (1986) 306-312

Plantinga, Alvin. *Warrant and Proper Function*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Plantinga, Alvin. *Warranted Christian Belief*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Plantinga, Alvin. *Warrant: The Current Debate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Plato. *Theatatus*. (tr. Benjamin Jowett). Indianapolis: Bobbs Merril Educational Publishing, 1949.

Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.