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### Dissertation Abstract: “Justification, Reasons and Truth”

Two natural ideas we have about justification are that we are justified by basing our beliefs on good reasons, rather than wishful thinking or blind prejudice, and that justification makes our beliefs objectively likely to be true. Despite their appeal, respecting both of these ideas is impossible if we think that one’s reasons for belief are determined entirely by one’s psychological states, such as one’s beliefs and experiences, and not by how the world is around one. If one’s reasons are isolated from the world, it seems that they could not make our beliefs likely to be true.

This is why the debate between epistemic internalists, who think that justification is determined just by states of the believer, and externalists, who deny this, seems so intractable. Internalists are motivated by the intuition that justification is determined by the subject’s reasons for belief, whereas externalists are motivated by the intuition that justification makes our beliefs objectively likely to be true.

In my dissertation I argue that the key to resolving this dispute is to reject the view that one’s reasons are determined entirely by one’s psychological states in favor of the view that one’s reasons are facts – including facts of the world around one. We can then accept both the idea that justification is a matter of the subject’s reasons for belief and the idea that justification makes one’s beliefs objectively likely to be true. On this view one’s reasons (the facts of the world around us) *can* make one’s beliefs likely to be true.

When we deliberate about what to believe we deliberate on the facts: the fact that the light is red is Alice’s reason for believing she should slow down; the fact that the baby is crying is John’s reason for believing that it is hungry. And normally when we form beliefs on the basis of perception, we don’t self-consciously attend to ourselves and the fact that we are perceiving; we attend to the world around us and form beliefs on the basis of what we see. Both deliberation and perception reveal that our reasons are not isolated from the facts of the world around us; our reasons *are* the facts of the world around us.

But the traditional view that a subject’s reasons are determined entirely by her psychological states retains considerable appeal. In cases of total hallucination it is natural to think that our reasons for belief would be just as good as in normal perception – after all, hallucinating subjects can be said to act just as “rationally” as normal subjects in believing what they do. But if the world around one is screened off in that way from playing any role in one’s reasons, it seems that our reasons cannot properly affect the truth of our beliefs. So the motivations for internalism and externalism would remain incompatible.

I argue that the view of reasons as facts can respect the idea that hallucinating subjects’ beliefs are justified (*simpliciter*) while also holding that subjects in normal cases are *better* justified. We can thereby retain the connection between justification and truth. Furthermore, the view of reasons I develop accepts the idea that in some sense hallucinating subjects are the epistemic equals of their normal counterparts, if we recognize that the epistemic norm of rationality is different from that of justification. When we think hallucinating subjects are just as rational as normal subjects, we are judging the internal coherence of their mental states with no regard to whether their beliefs are true or experiences veridical. This is the genuine insight in the idea that hallucinating subjects’ beliefs are just as rational as normal subjects’.

I argue, however, that justification cannot be exhaustively characterized by norms of this type. Justification is fundamentally tied to how one answers the question of what to believe; that is, to the perspective of the first-person deliberator. In answering that question I do not bracket the veridicality of my experiences: I base my beliefs on the facts that I am aware of. Justification is thereby a matter of one’s reasons for belief, and it also makes one’s beliefs objectively likely to be true.