

# Replies to Comesaña, Mirrachi, and Neta

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I am grateful to Lisa, Ram, and Juan for these excellent and challenging comments on a project that I've been attempting to develop for several years now. They have given me much to think about and I cannot respond to every insight. Instead I'll focus on a few key points and try to bring to bear some other considerations for evaluating their arguments. Let me begin by setting the stage with a wide-angle view of my project.

Certain philosophical questions stick with you. For me, one such question is whether there is a foundation for belief that can, in some sense, provide philosophical assurance that our beliefs are true. One of my earliest philosophical influences was Bertrand Russell's work, particularly Russell (1912), Russell (1914/1993), and Russell (1948), and, at one point in time, I thought that an acquaintance theory had the resources to adequately answer this question. And yet the more I thought about foundations for belief, I saw that purported foundational beliefs were surrounded by a host of background beliefs that supported these alleged foundational beliefs. So, for instance, as I discuss in chapter five, the claim that one has direct foundational justification for beliefs about appearance states depends on our justification for thinking that we knowingly reidentify color and shape properties across time. Thus, philosophical assurance for the claim that this appears red requires assurance that this is the same color that one had seen previously. But such judgments are not given in the specious present. So, the insight that background beliefs play a key role in a belief's justification seemed to fit better with a coherence theory than a foundations theory. (And it seemed to fit better with a coherence theory than an infinitist theory, but that's a story for another occasion.)

A second source for this project involved thinking about the ascendancy of coherentism in light of the perceived failure of logical empiricism and its subsequent demise

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with the development of defeasible foundations (and throw into the mix BonJour's rationalist coherentism, which I think is different from the coherentism that grows out of a reflection on the proper methodology of science). A bevy of mid-20th century epistemologists—Quine, Sellars, Harman, Goodman, and others—were coherentists. And yet their coherentism was different from the kind of rationalist coherentist view one sees in BonJour (1985).<sup>1</sup> BonJour (1998) argues that his rationalist position in *SEK* is in tension with his coherentism about empirical knowledge. And so a question I set myself was this: is there a way to rehabilitate a kind of naturalistic coherentism that one finds in Quine, et. al. that provides a plausible alternative to rationalistic coherentism?<sup>2</sup> As I conceived it, this project involved taking the methodology of reflective equilibrium, whose goodness seems to be a lesson from the failure of logical positivism and continued reflection on the methodology of science, and turn it into a view about necessary and sufficient conditions for a belief's justification. Thus, in part my aim, was to incorporate a coherentist view that grows out of the perceived failure of logical empiricism but doesn't find a place on the contemporary menu of options in traditional epistemology.

So those are the two threads I was attempting to weave together. I took myself to be constrained by the kinds of views one sees in these mid-century coherentists. Thus, a key part of the project involved the conservatism of Quine, et. al., and its role in a non-rationalist coherentist account. I'll turn now to the comments. I'll begin with Juan's concern about conservatism and then move to Ram's suggestion on the way to drop conservatism. I'll then discuss Lisa's concerns about the role of fact-dependence in an account of justification.

## 1 Conservatism and Objective Bayesianism

Juan asks how epistemic conservatism fits with an objective Bayesian view that I expressed sympathy for in the final chapter. Let's set some context first. Bayesianism is a popular view about the logic of induction (see Howson and Urbach (1993)). I've argued for an explanationist view about induction and so a question is how

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<sup>1</sup>Missing from this ever so brief description is, e.g., Lehrer (1974).

<sup>2</sup>Naturalism in epistemology is not metaphysical naturalism, but rather the view that proper methodology is the methodology of the natural sciences. Following Whewell (1847/2014) and Peirce, the methodology of natural science is the explanatory method. Epistemological naturalism and metaphysical non-naturalism are consistent. For example, one may think that the best overall explanatory account of the human person is one in which the human person is a composite of physical body and immaterial soul. Historically, though, a substance dualist position has been aligned with rationalism and foundationalism. I see no reason why this must be the case, though.

explanationism fits with Bayesianism. In the literature this question has focused on van Fraassen (1989)'s argument that any attempt to give explanatory principles a role in the confirmation of a hypothesis is inconsistent with Bayesian updating and ought to be rejected. In the final chapter I aimed to grapple with this issue. I first set down the case for thinking that Bayesianism is the logic of induction. Then I considered the explanationist responses to van Fraassen's argument. A popular response is to argue that explanationist thinking is a useful psychological tool for respecting the constraints of Bayesian rules. This heuristic view (see McGrew (2003)) implies that (a) the explanatory power of a hypothesis is a reason for thinking that a hypothesis is true only if explanatory power is coordinated with a Bayesian virtue (such as a high value to a hypothesis's likelihood) and (b) that, in some sense, Bayesianism is the more fundamental view (see also Henderson (2014) for a related view). It's part (b) that strikes me as wrong. So the last part of the chapter aimed to argue that explanatory reasoning isn't merely a psychological tool, but a foundation for addressing some key problems in Bayesian epistemology.

A crucial problem for Bayesian epistemology that I focused on is the *problem of the priors*. A Bayesian view of any stripe requires an initial probability function across a language and prior to any experience. Let us call this function,  $Cr_\emptyset$  (a priori credence function (acred)). There needs to be principles that constrain  $Cr_\emptyset$ , but, crucially, once  $Cr_\emptyset$  is set, any new credence function  $Cr_{s \neq \emptyset}$  is derived by the update rules set from  $Cr_\emptyset$ . For instance, suppose the first change after  $Cr_\emptyset$  is that you acquire new data,  $e$ , relevant to  $h$ . Then  $Cr_e(h) = Cr_\emptyset(h | e)$ .

The *problem of the priors* is the problem of how to characterize the principles that yield this a priori credence function,  $Cr_\emptyset$ . A special case of this problem is to give principles for  $Cr_\emptyset$  that imply that learning from experience is possible. That is, principles that imply that

**Inductivism:**  $Cr_\emptyset(A_{i+1} | U_i) > Cr_\emptyset(A_{i+1})$   
 where,  $A_i$  =[Outcome A occurs on the  $i$ th trial],  $U_i$  =[Outcome A occurs on all of the first  $i$ th trials]. (see Huemer (2009))

It is well-known that the principle of indifference does not yield a unique  $Cr_\emptyset$ . Moreover, the principle of indifference doesn't yield a  $Cr_\emptyset$  that permits learning from experience. The problem is that there are different ways of distributing probabilities. Let's take a simple case in which we have an unknown process  $X_i$  with two results, success=1 or failure=2. The process will occur 4 times. Thus, there are  $2^4$  possible outcomes. Question: how should we think about the probability of events in the outcome space? First suggestion: distribute probability evenly across each sequence. Result: what is the a priori probability that we would observe a 1 on the 4th outcome.

Answer: 1/2. What is the probability that we would observe a 1 on the 4th outcome given a string of 1s on the previous 3 results. It's the same: 1/2. Why? Because the a priori probability of  $(1, 1, 1, 1) = (1, 1, 1, 0)$ . Consequence: learning from experience isn't possible.

Second suggestion: distribute probability evenly across each proportion of successes over total cases? Thus, we have the following proportions:  $\binom{4}{0}, \binom{4}{1}, \binom{4}{2}, \binom{4}{3}, \binom{4}{4}$ . Note that these suggestions give different probabilities to the same sequences. Thus on the first suggestion  $Pr_a(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4) = \frac{1}{16}$ . Whereas on the second  $Pr_b(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4) = \frac{1}{5}$ . The key property of the second suggestion is that it allows for learning from experience.<sup>3</sup>

$$Pr_b(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4 | 1_1, 1_2, 1_3) = \frac{Pr_b(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4)}{Pr_b(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4) + Pr_b(1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 0_4)} = \frac{.20}{.20 + .05} = .8$$

In this case, learning from experience requires that probabilities be distributed over the relevant proportions.

The difference between distributing probabilities uniformly across each sequence and distributing probabilities uniformly across relevant proportions corresponds to Carnap's two measures of confirmation. Carnap's initial measure implied that learning from experience was impossible. His second measure, across proportions  $\binom{n}{k}$ , implied that one could learn from experience. Carnap's idea with the second measure is that within a particular proportion the different sequences of events are not fundamentally different ways the world is. In our example above, one proportion of successes over all events is  $\binom{4}{2} = 6$ . This means that there are six different sequences in which 4 trials of process  $X$  results in two successes. According to Carnap's rationale, these six different sequences are just rearrangements of the same properties. Thus, we should distribute probabilities uniformly first across the relevant proportions and then within each grouping distribute uniformly across the sequences in the relevant grouping. This has the upshot that learning from experience is possible.<sup>4</sup>

But is this just special pleading for anti-skepticism? No. Laws are explanatory and often laws explain not specific sequences of events but relevant proportions. In our specific example, one may think that process  $X$  is a lawlike process that has a propensity for producing a certain number of successes. The particular order of successes does not matter.

Carnap's requirement of symmetry provides a foundation for this second non-skeptical measure.

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<sup>3</sup>The likelihoods, e.g.,  $Pr(1_1, 1_2, 1_3 | 1_1, 1_2, 1_3, 1_4) = 1$  and so we can ignore them.

<sup>4</sup>Thanks to Mike Titelbaum for explaining Carnap's rationale for his second measure.

**Requirement of Symmetry:** Let  $a_i$  and  $a_j$  be two distinct individuals. Let  $H$  and  $H'$  be two propositions such that  $H'$  results from  $H$  by taking  $a_j$  for  $a_i$  and vice versa. The  $Cr_0$  must be such that  $Cr_0(H) = Cr_0(H')$ . (Carnap 1962, 313)

This requirement has a natural explanationist defense. Apart from any information about particular individuals, it's arbitrary to find a difference in relevant probabilities of traits. There's much more to say here but in the interest of time I'll move on. My point here is to strengthen Juan's remark in the following way: there are fertile explanatory grounds for handling the problem of the priors without involving epistemic conservatism.

And yet my concern is that this non-conservative explanationist ground doesn't do justice to what is really going on here, and that is, reflective equilibrium. We have natural judgements (intuitions, if you like) about cases and principles and the ultimate principles that characterize  $Cr_0$  are driven by explanatory coherence. This is my first point in response to Juan's thoughtful question. To put it tendentiously: explanatory coherence is ultimately the only game in town, and epistemic conservatism is the price for admission to the game.

My second point is this. There are two plausible views about the non-derived justification for some non-empirical claims: an entitlement theory (Wright (2004), Wright (2007)) and a rationalist theory. Conservatism is a kind of entitlement theory. It's a general entitlement theory, one that strikes me as a sober one because it is hard to see why we have an entitlement to non-skeptical claims unless that entitlement comes from something about the fact that we are not skeptics. Perhaps such an entitlement theory is false, but my question is this: is any entitlement theory true and if so then are there resources to couple an explanatory coherentism with the true entitlement theory. If so, then we've found a plausible way to develop a form of non-rationalist coherentism. (And then we have a kind of explanationist Bayesianism: entitlements plus explanatory virtues yield principles for  $Cr_0$ . That's the view I was after in the final chapter).

## 2 The problem of hinge propositions

Ram helpfully calls attention to the role that I see epistemic conservatism playing in an explanationist account of justification and he argues that it is unnecessary. I hope he is right because it'd be a good result for a naturalistic coherentist view. So let's see.

The core issue for conservatism (or an entitlement theory) is that some propositions that are so fundamental to the evaluation of the rest of our beliefs that it's hard to see how these claims can receive support.<sup>5</sup> The insight here is there is a difference between the reason for accepting that (a) there are 15 prime numbers less than 50 and (b) we successfully track color and space properties across time. For (a), we count. For (b), any reason for that claim depends on the claim at issue and it seems so fundamental that even a coherence style defense appears tendentious. Concerning these latter kinds of propositions, Thomas Reid called them 'first principles', Kant thought they were principles based on the categories of understanding and the forms of sensibility, and Wittgenstein introduced the idea that these claims are "hinges" on which the door of inquiry turns. I attempted to appeal to the idea that in some sense we have no evidence for these propositions, that the evidence for them is 'empty'. But as Ram recognizes, I was of two minds about this. In one sense we have no direct evidence for these claims and so the evidence is empty (and hence conservatism is needed), but in another sense, we have the virtues of an explanatory system in which these claims have key explanatory properties and so we have significant reason for accepting them.

Ram focuses on one hinge proposition and offers an argument that we are not in a position of empty evidence for it.

(†) Our evidence is not globally misleading

First, is (†) one of these special cases like (b) above? Well, it'd be question-begging to begin with some good evidence and argue that our evidence is good. If we think of an argument as marshaling some evidence for a conclusion then something like (†) does seem to be a requirement for arguments.

Ram offers an interesting argument against Crispin Wright's view that while there are positive considerations for (†) there is no evidence for (†). Here's what Wright says: "all enquiry involves so far untested presuppositions and that the attempt to improve one's epistemic position in this respect is doomed to failure." Wright (2011) I accept this view and conservatism is an attempt to address it.

Ram's argument is as follows

1. It's rational for you to proportion your confidence in a hypothesis H to the degree to which your total evidence supports H.
2. (1) is true only if it's rational for you to be confident that your evidence is not globally misleading.

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<sup>5</sup>Rationalism is the better theory here if it's true that such propositions are grasped with rational insight.

3. So, it's rational for you to be confident that your evidence is not globally misleading.
4. So, your total evidence supports the hypothesis that your evidence is not globally misleading.

There's a tension in the book that I didn't resolve. On the one hand, I said that some propositions are rationally believed in a special evidential state in which it is impossible to have evidence for or against them. On the other hand, I said that the justification for each proposition consists in explanatory coherence. It's natural to take this second claim to imply that those propositions in the special state which I call *empty symmetrical evidence* are themselves justified by explanatory coherence. Indeed, this is part of what I wanted to say. So what gives?

I was thinking that there are two distinct stages to the justificatory process. There's the *getting started stage* and there's the *revising stage*. The *getting started stage* is the stage at which one is forming beliefs; it's unreflective, influenced by society, etc. The revising stage is marked by having beliefs justified by explanatory coherence and changing beliefs by increasing explanatory coherence. This is a difficult distinction to appreciate because by the time we start reflecting on our beliefs we are past the *getting started stage* and in the *revising stage*. The problem that I took myself to have is what to say about beliefs in the *getting started stage*. Are any of these beliefs justified? I thought: if not then the revising stage is like window-dressing a house that should be demolished. Perhaps this is a mistake. Perhaps the thing to say is this: you are entitled to start wherever you are. An entitlement is distinct from justification. You can be entitled to a belief even though it is not epistemically justified. That sounds a bit odd to my ear but there are ways to smooth this out similarly to what I did for conservatism in the second chapter, viz., an entitlement is easily lost and just relevant to *getting started stage*. If you want to be epistemically justified in your opinions then they better be explanatorily coherent and beat all competitors. If not then you're not justified. And moreover you lose the prior entitlement. In truth, the difference between this view and the view I offered in the book is (I think) small. The idea is just to drop conservatism and replace it with a general defeasible entitlement to start wherever you are. This honestly just seems like a choice of words. Call it what you want: the idea is to forego the project of an independent justification for the *getting started stage*.

Does this answer Ram's concern? I'm not sure, but I want to add another aspect to the problem of hinge propositions. In his book *Perceiving*, Chisholm (1957) writes the following:

We hope . . . that our marks of evidence will also be marks of truth. We hope that, if there is some general mark of evidence, a certain type of state M which is a mark of evidence for a certain type of hypothesis H, then M will be a reliable criterion of truth; we hope that, more often than not, when we believe H while we are in state M, we will believe H truly. (Chisholm 1957, 38)

Chisholm is onto something fundamental here. We hope that ( $\dagger$ ) is true. And, there's a sense in which we are rational in believing in accord with the evidence only if ( $\dagger$ ), that is Ram's premise 2. What justifies this hope? I discuss this issue in an old paper.<sup>6</sup>

An account that the belief that marks of evidence are marks of truth is rational can be made by appropriating the Kantian idea of rational hope. With respect to practical rationality the Kantian hope is that persons are free. This hope is a postulate of practical reason, as such people are rationally entitled to believe that they are free. Although this may not be Kant's rationale the claim that we are free can be justified in the following way. This avoids the embarrassing result that the postulate is an arbitrary assumption. The idea is this. The justification for the postulate lies in the connection between freedom and moral obligation. Practical reason issues moral directives (e.g., you ought to respect persons). But these moral directives are binding only if persons are free. By acting on moral directives persons exemplify themselves as free beings. That is, by acting on moral reasons persons represent themselves as free beings in a way that carries justification for the postulate. On this conception of Kant's reasoning, moral action implies epistemic justification for the postulate. Kantian hope, in this way, involves epistemically rational belief.

A similar defense can be given for the Chisholmian hope that our marks of evidence are marks of truth. On this line of reasoning perceptual experience issues doxastic directives (e.g., believe that there are tables) but these directives are mandatory only if the perceptual experience is truth-productive. By forming beliefs based on the deliverances of perceptual experience one exemplifies experience as truth-productive. That is, by believing the assertive contents of perception one represents these assertive contents as worthy of belief, as that is truth-productive. In this way the epistemic practice of forming beliefs on the basis of presentational contents implies that one has justification for the proposition that presentational contents are marks of truth. (Poston 2007, 102–103)

I see Chisholmian hope here as fundamental and in my view it is a hope that is vindicated by the explanatory success of the subsequent view that is based on such

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<sup>6</sup>Poston (2007)

hope.<sup>7</sup>

### 3 Explanatory power and fact-dependence

Lisa helpfully presses me on a fundamental commitment to the kind of project that I'm interested in, viz., developing an account of philosophical assurance that is perspectival. I put this in terms of 'justification' in the book, but I'm happy to allow that there are many different and interesting dimensions to normativity that often go under the term 'justification' that are different from the one that I focus on. (cf Alston (2005)) To assess her challenge let us start with the notion of explanatory power.

What is explanatory power? Let's begin with an uncontroversial remark. Explanatory power is a property of some propositions that comes in degrees in virtue of the ability to explain some other propositions. This implies that there may be two propositions that differ with respect to their ability to explain some other propositions. But what is the explanatory relation? In virtue of what does it hold that  $p$  is able to explain  $q$ ? Salmon (1989) appeared almost three decades ago, so there's more than a few views of the explanatory relation out there. Many explanationists punt on the nature of the explanatory relation, but some views of the explanatory relation depend on more fundamental forms of inference (e.g, the DN model, the IS model), and so some views on the explanatory relation require an epistemology of deduction or induction. I thought there was a view of the explanatory relation that fit well with the explanationist project and avoided the standard charge of over-intellectualizing reasonable belief. On the view I argue for the explanatory relation is a primitive relation grasped early in cognitive development.

On the view I argued for in the book  $p$  is able to explain  $q$  if and only if *if  $p$  then  $q$  because  $p$*  (note that  $q$  is here taken to be true). I argued that BECAUSE is a primitive concept. Lisa focuses on a commitment of my view that facts such as *if  $p$  then  $q$  because  $p$*  do not depend on some actual facts about explanations. She correctly observes that false propositions do not explain and are not explained. But note that my view isn't that false propositions *explain*; rather the view is that some false propositions are *potential* explanations. Even if  $p$  is false, it may be true that *if  $p$  then  $q$  because  $p$* . As she notes later, explanatory power is a modal notion about potential explanations but she claims that "explanatory power ... inherits fact-dependence from the fact-dependence of actual explanatory relations" (p. 6). I

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<sup>7</sup>cf Lehrer on self-trust and the faith of the non-skeptic, which he may be picking up from Chisholm. Lehrer (2000)

don't see any argument for this. The truth-value of *if p then q because p* does not depend on p.

If I understand Lisa's remarks correctly she aims to make a more general point about the good-making features of inferences. In particular she claims that "our best account of when inductive inferences are good ones appeals . . . to the actual structure of the world" (p. 7). My question for Lisa is how this point fits with the widely-shared judgment that the inferences of subjects in a demon-world are good (similarly, the inductive inferences of Aristotelian physics, Ptolemaic astronomers, pre-Daltonian chemists, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

Lisa continues to argue that virtuous explanatory coherence is not sufficient for justified belief. She claims: "an internalist would argue that all that matters for the notion of a good inductive inference *relevant to justification* is that the background explanatory considerations one's inferences depends on are, *by one's own lights*, likely to be an adequate reflection of the world" (p. 7, emphasis in original). I want to flag this "by one's own lights" because one interpretation of this phrase is a form of radical subjectivism. On such a view, if someone judges that  $2+2+2+2=9$  then they are justified in believing this. Radical subjectivism is not epistemic internalism. Internalism proposes norms for good inferences, norms that one can violate. The crucial internalist insight is that the norms are constrained by the evidence the subject possesses. Note that this is different from the idea that the norms are only ones that a subject consciously endorses. My view is different from Foley-rationality: if a subject adopts the norm to believe the worst explanation then that subject isn't justified.

Lisa offers a case aimed to illustrate how structural facts about the world, facts that are not necessarily captured by one's explanatory position, make a difference to the goodness of an inference. She gives this case:

1. Every argument I've encountered that's worth discussing has been written by a man.
2. Therefore, every argument worth discussing has been written by a man.

This straight-rule induction is analogous to the raven case I discuss in the book to show the inadequacy of inference apart from explanatory considerations. A standard problem with straight-rule inference is the inability to distinguish between accidental generalizations and law-like generalizations. In the case of the inference Lisa mentions a straightforward appeal to explanatory considerations shows that the inference

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<sup>8</sup>cf. John Norton's material theory of induction for a challenge to the idea that there is one true theory of induction.

is horrendous. What explanatory relation is there between the property *maleness* and the property *authoring an argument worthy of discussion*? There is none. This inference is a standard case in which straight-rule induction licenses obscene inferences; explanatory considerations do not license such an inference.<sup>9</sup>

Lisa continues to argue that being systematically out of touch with the facts is a sufficient condition to criticize a subject's beliefs. I don't disagree with this, but the criticism must be compatible with the judgement that subjects with misleading evidence can be justified in their beliefs. On my view, it'd be wrong to criticize a subject's belief under conditions of illusion and deception. Similarly, it'd be a mistake to criticize a subject's belief under the conditions of social deception. Consider, for instance, Harman's assassination case.<sup>10</sup> A leader is assassinated and the very first printing of a well-respected paper correctly reports that the leader is assassinated. A few copies of this paper are released to the public but a revolutionary group quickly gains control of the presses and rewrites the story. Accordingly to this story, among other things, the leader was not assassinated. Completely unaware of the intrigue, one of the few issues of the paper with the correct story is on your doorstep. Everyone else gets the revised story. So the question for Lisa is this: are the folk who read the false story unjustified in believing that the leader was not assassinated?

The epistemic dimensions of social control and bad ideology are fascinating and worth reflecting on. Miranda Fricker, for instance, observes that individuals in a lower social position can suffer testimonial injustice by not being taken as a 'knower.'<sup>11</sup> Amia Srinivasan has recently argued that the epistemic dimensions of bad ideology provide a reason for externalism. She writes, "externalism offers a theory of epistemic justification that makes normative sense if one has a radical worldview — that is, a view according to which bad ideology shapes and constrains our access to the truth."<sup>12</sup> I can't do justice to Srinivasan's fascinating article in these brief comments, but one of her cases helpfully clarifies the issue I believe that Lisa is on to.

Domestic Violence: Radha is a young woman who lives in rural India. Her husband, Krishnan, regularly beats her. Krishnan often expresses regret for having had to beat her, but explains that it was Radha's fault for being insufficiently obedient or caring. Radha finds these beatings humiliating and guilt-inducing; she believes she has only herself to blame, and that she deserves to be beaten for her bad behaviour. After all her

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<sup>9</sup>Objection: they possibly do. Reply: true, but this is just the point that reasonable belief must be sensitive to misleading evidence.

<sup>10</sup>(Harman 1973, 143)

<sup>11</sup>Fricker (2007)

<sup>12</sup>(Srinivasan TBA, 1)

parents, elders and friends agree that if she is being beaten it must be her fault, and no one she knows has ever offered a contrary opinion. Moreover Radha has thoroughly reflected on the issue and concluded that, given the natural social roles of men and women, it's justified for men to beat their wives when they misbehave.<sup>13</sup>

The issue here is whether Radha is epistemically justified in believing that *she deserves to be beaten for her bad behavior*. Here's an argument against internalism.

1. Epistemic internalism implies that Radha is epistemically justified in believing that claim.
2. Radha may be excused for her belief but she is not epistemically justified. (Austin's distinction between excuse and justification)
3. So, internalism is wrong.

There is much to say about this but let me make two comments. First, one of the prompts for my 'Social Evil' paper Poston (2014) was the observation about how bad ideology can shape individual ideological beliefs in such a way that they are reinforcing those very beliefs through normal evidential mechanisms. Thus, for example, racist beliefs in the reconstruction era were self-reinforcing in such a way that the normal means of acquiring evidence through observation and testimony supported these very racist beliefs. E.g., the belief that access to education should be given to only the intelligent; but the property of intelligence depends on access to education and so people groups systematically denied access to education will wrongly appear to have the very property that determines access to education.

One view is that the falsity of these beliefs is a sufficient condition for their irrationality. Another view is that it's the falsity and the fact of social control that is sufficient for their irrationality. A dimension that shouldn't be lost is empathy towards the very people who have such bad ideological beliefs because they are unknowingly subject to social control. There is a dimension to understanding another person that involves understanding the reasons they have for their view. How all this fits together is a topic for another paper.

Second, premise 1 is true only of some internalist views. If one is an acquaintance theorist, Radha is not justified in her belief because she is not acquainted with the relevant truth-maker. There is a political dimension to the quest of philosophical assurance, as Socrates demonstrated with the cost of his life. My view is not an

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<sup>13</sup>(Srinivasan TBA, 9)

acquaintance theory, but it is not a phenomenal conservative view either (which I think has a more difficult problem with this kind of objection). I do think that there are problems with bad ideology that are not solved by the correct theory of justification. But this is to say that the problem of bad ideology is horrendous. In fact, it's so bad I've argued it's a new form of the problem of evil. (Poston (2014)) Society can be incredibly evil and a measure of evil is how it turns good people into cogs in unjust processes. I reserve some hope that the requirement of competing explanations would have great value in leading people subject to bad ideology to question that very ideology.

## 4 Conclusion

I haven't been able to discuss all the valuable insights that Juan, Ram, and Lisa gave me. I thank them again for the time that they spent thinking through this project with me.

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