

# EXTERNALIST VERSIONS OF EVIDENTIALISM

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Evidentialism is typically viewed as a version of internalism. In this paper, I will argue that this is a mistake: even views exhibiting fairly extreme forms of externalism can be evidentialist views. After saying what evidentialism is and identifying four grades of externalism, I will argue that, for each of these grades of externalism (from the least external first grade to the most external fourth grade), there is a version of evidentialism exhibiting that grade of externalism.<sup>1</sup> I will conclude by briefly explaining where my externalist evidentialist sympathies lie.

## 1. What is Evidentialism?

One can be an evidentialist about either propositional justification or doxastic justification.<sup>2</sup> My focus will be solely on evidentialism about doxastic justification, which can be stated as follows, using both an ‘if and only if’ claim and a supervenience claim:

*Evidentialism:* (I) S’s belief B is justified if and only if (a) S has evidence E, (b) B is based on evidence E, (c) B fits evidence E, and (d) S’s total evidence does not include defeaters for B.<sup>3</sup> (II) Justification

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<sup>1</sup> That there are externalist versions of evidentialism isn’t a new thesis. See McCain (2015a) and his discussion there of Alston (1989 [1988]), Comesaña (2010), and Williamson (2000). What is novel is the claim that for *each* of the grades of externalism identified in this paper, there is a version of evidentialism exhibiting it.

<sup>2</sup> Roughly, propositional justification is something you have for a proposition in virtue of the evidence you have, whether you believe it or not and whether your belief is properly based (on your evidence) or not. Doxastic justification is something a belief of yours has in virtue of the evidence you have and of your belief being based on that evidence.

<sup>3</sup> A defeater here is thought of as a mental state of the believing subject, much like evidence is thought of as a mental state of the believing subject. Much of what I say below in the main text about evidence applies to defeaters as well. The main difference is that, whereas evidence for a belief contribute to that belief’s being justified, defeaters for a belief inhibit that belief from being justified.

supervenes on (a) one's evidence (all the evidence one has) and (b) the basing relations that hold between one's beliefs and one's evidence.<sup>4</sup>

According to the versions of evidentialism on which I'll be focusing, evidence a person has consists of mental states of that person such as beliefs, sensory experiences, memory impressions, and intuitions or seemings.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Four Grades of Externalism

I will be distinguishing four grades of externalism, starting with the weakest (first) grade and moving to stronger grades.<sup>6</sup> Epistemologists differ concerning where to draw the line between internalism and externalism. The two main views are the *accessibilist* view, which says that only the *first* of these four grades of externalism is compatible with internalism, and the *mentalist* view, which says that only the first *two* grades of externalism are compatible with internalism. The four grades of externalism that I'll consider are denials (in various ways) of the following four kinds of internalism: Strong Access Internalism (SAI), Weak Access Internalism (WAI), Strong Mentalist Internalism (SMI), and Weak Mentalist Internalism (WMI). The first two differ from each other over whether justification requires access to the satisfaction of *all* or only *some* of the conditions necessary for justification; the latter two differ from each other over

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<sup>4</sup> What I call 'doxastic justification' Conee and Feldman (2004 [1985]: 93) call 'well-foundedness'. See also McCain (2014: 3).

<sup>5</sup> See Conee and Feldman (2004 [2001]: 59-61) and McCain (2014: 10-11).

<sup>6</sup> I'll be working on the assumption that access internalism (which requires actual or potential awareness of some or all justification-contributors) is a stronger sort of internalism than mental state internalism (which requires that some or all justification-contributors are mental states). See Bergmann (2006: 9-13, 47-59, and 70) for some reasons for thinking access internalism is truer to the spirit of internalism (and, in that sense, a stronger sort of internalism) than mental state internalism.

whether the supervenience of justification on the subject's evidence and the holding of the relevant basing relations applies to *all* or only *some* cognizers.<sup>7</sup>

The first grade of externalism can be stated as follows:

*First Grade of Externalism (Denial of SAI):* A person S's belief B can be justified even if S is not aware of (or potentially aware of) the obtaining of *some fact* the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of S's belief B.<sup>8</sup>

This view seems externalist because it exhibits a common feature of externalist views.

Externalists often say things such as “what matters for justification is that the belief *in fact satisfies* the condition in question (e.g., a reliability condition, a safety condition, a sensitivity condition, or a proper function condition), not that the subject *is aware* that this condition is satisfied”. This is the sort of claim that internalists often find objectionable. So when the first grade of externalism says that *although it's required for justification that some fact obtain, it's not required that the subject is aware of this fact's obtaining*, it has the appearance of being an externalist view. At the very least, I think it makes sense to think of this as a grade of externalism (even if the lowest grade).

But although the first grade of externalism seems to be an externalist position, appearances are in this case misleading.<sup>9</sup> Alston (1989 [1988]: 233-4) and Fumerton (1995: 81) have pointed out that serious trouble attaches to SAI views—views according to which *S's belief B is justified only if S is aware (or potentially aware) of the satisfaction of each of the conditions necessary for B's justification*. The problem is that, if SAI is true, the list of conditions that are

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<sup>7</sup> I define these four kinds of internalism more carefully below in notes 8, 11, 15, and 16.

<sup>8</sup> SAI requires, for the justification of a belief B, that the subject is (potentially or actually) aware of the obtaining of *every* fact the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of B.

<sup>9</sup> It may seem strange to say that a view can exhibit the lowest grade of externalism without counting as an externalist view. But the idea is that there are degrees of externalism and that a position has to exhibit a sufficient degree of externalism before it counts as an externalist position, full-stop, without qualification. In a similar way, there are degrees of justification but a belief has to exhibit a sufficient degree of justification before it counts as being justified, full-stop, without qualification.

necessary for justification can never be completed. Once one thinks one has the full list, one must add the further condition that the subject is aware that all of the conditions on *that* list are satisfied. And that just adds another condition, which requires the addition of yet another requiring that the subject is aware of the satisfaction of the just added condition, and so on *ad infinitum*. As a result, few if any philosophers (including internalist epistemologists) endorse SAI. Hence, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, it's rare to draw the line between internalism and externalism so that views exhibiting this first grade of externalism *must* count as externalist views.<sup>10</sup> Instead, endorsement of this first grade of externalism seems to be a simple consequence of requiring that views on justification not be confused or incoherent.

The second grade of externalism is:

*Second Grade of Externalism (Denial of WAI):* A person S's belief B can be justified even if S is not aware (or potentially aware) of the obtaining of *any of the facts* the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of S's belief B.<sup>11</sup>

WAI avoids the troubles Alston and Fumerton identify with SAI. As a result it has more supporters, and some people (myself included) think of WAI as definitive of internalism.<sup>12</sup> But there are others who seem to think that one can be an internalist even if one denies WAI. They

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<sup>10</sup> Juan Comesaña suggests that views exhibiting this first grade of externalism shouldn't count as internalist views. He says (2005: 71):

No theory that allows an external factor such as [the fact that the belief is supported by the evidence on which it is based] to play a justificatory role is going to be internalist in any interesting sense. If internalism were simply the claim that all the factors that justify a belief are internal factors except those that are external, then it wouldn't be a theory worth considering.

But in light of the implausibility of SAI (for the reasons Alston and Fumerton draw to our attention), there must be at least one necessary condition of justification such that it is not necessary for justification that the subject is aware that that condition is satisfied. To put it in Comesaña's terminology: there must be at least one factor playing a justificatory role that is not an internal factor. Given that even die-hard internalists like Fumerton (who is an internalist if anyone is) acknowledge this, Comesaña seems mistaken to say that this isn't an internalism worthy of the name. As we will see in the discussion that follows, there are sensible ways to draw the line between internalism and externalism that differ from Comesaña's way of drawing the line.

<sup>11</sup> WAI requires, for the justification of a belief B, that the subject is (potentially or actually) aware of the obtaining of *some* fact the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of B.

<sup>12</sup> See Bergmann (2006: 9-13).

want to emphasize not the internality of access but the internality of the mental.<sup>13</sup> According to them, if a view says that a belief's justification depends on the subject's mental states, then that view counts as an internalist view, even if that view doesn't require (for justification) access to those mental states or anything else relevant to the belief's justification (and, hence, even if that view denies WAI). Thus, these philosophers think that exhibiting the second grade of externalism is not yet enough to count as an externalist view.<sup>14</sup>

The third and fourth grades of externalism, which differ only in whether they apply to *some* cognizers or *all* cognizers, can be stated as follows:

*Third Grade of Externalism (Denial of WAI and SMI):* For *some* cognizer S, (a) S's belief B can be justified even if S is not aware (or potentially aware) of the obtaining of *any of the facts* the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of S's belief B and (b) justification for S's beliefs does not supervene on S's mental states (and the basing relations holding between them).<sup>15</sup>

*Fourth Grade of Externalism (Denial of WAI and WMI):* For *any* cognizer S, (a) S's belief B can be justified even if S is not aware (or potentially aware) of the obtaining of *any of the facts* the obtaining of which is required for and contributes to the justification of S's belief B and (b) justification for S's beliefs does not supervene on S's mental states (and the basing relations holding between them).<sup>16</sup>

The differences between these two grades will become clearer when we consider (in Section 5) what a version of evidentialism would look like if it exhibited the third grade and not the fourth grade of externalism and (in Section 6) what a version of evidentialism would look like if it exhibited the fourth grade of externalism. Here I'll just note the following two things. First, virtually everyone thinks that if a view exhibits either the third or fourth grade of externalism, it

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Conee and Feldman (2004 [2001]: 55-6) and Pollock and Cruz (1999: 132-5). I discuss these positions in Bergmann (2006: ch 3).

<sup>14</sup> I think this is a mistake, for reasons given in Bergmann (2006: 49-57 and 70).

<sup>15</sup> SMI is the view that for *any* person S, justification for S's beliefs supervenes on S's mental states (and the basing relations holding between them). If a view denies WAI but affirms SMI, then it exhibits the second, but not the third grade of externalism.

<sup>16</sup> WMI is the view that for *some* person S, justification for S's beliefs supervenes on S's mental states (and the basing relations holding between them). If a view denies both WAI and SMI but affirms WMI, then it exhibits the third but not the fourth grade of externalism.

counts as a version of externalism. Second, each of the higher grades of externalism entails each of the grades of externalism that are lower than it.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. Evidentialism Exhibiting the First Grade of Externalism

The standard versions of evidentialism unabashedly exhibit the first grade of externalism. As Conee and Feldman say, what matters for a belief's justification is that the person has evidence for it and that the belief fits that evidence. They explicitly deny that those holding justified beliefs must be aware (potentially or actually) of the fact that the belief in question fits the evidence. They acknowledge that the support relation that evidence stands in to a justified belief based on it (which mirrors the relation of fit that a justified belief stands in to the evidence on which it is based) is part of the explanation of the fact that the belief is justified. But they insist that "this does not imply that internalists are committed to the view that there must be some internal representation of this fact [about the support relation]" (2004 [2001]: 76). What matters is the fact that the evidence supports the belief (i.e., that the belief fits the evidence); this fact "may help to account for the justification without the person making any mental use of this fact" (2004 [2001]: 76).

But although Conee and Feldman's version of evidentialism isn't so extravagantly (and implausibly) internalist as to endorse SAI, it does seem to endorse WAI. For it requires for a belief's justification that the believer *has* good evidence for that belief and that evidence one has is something one has "some potential to retrieve" (2008: 89). Although they are reluctant to be

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<sup>17</sup> Denying WAI entails denying SAI, so the second grade entails the first grade; denying WMI entails denying SMI, so the fourth grade entails the third grade; and denying both WAI and SMI entails denying WAI, so the third grade entails the second grade. None of this is intended to suggest that denying SMI entails denying WAI or that there can't be things other than mental states that are accessible on reflection.

more specific than this, it is clear that they have some kind of accessibility condition in mind when it comes to clarifying which of one's mental states can count as evidence.<sup>18</sup> So one's evidence is a contributor to the justification of one's beliefs and one's belief is justified in virtue of this evidence only if the believer is actually or potentially aware of it (i.e., only if she has some potential to retrieve it).<sup>19</sup> Thus, although Conee and Feldman's evidentialism exhibits the first grade of externalism, it does not exhibit the second grade of externalism.

It isn't only Conee and Feldman who endorse a version of evidentialism that seems committed to WAI, thereby opposing the second grade of externalism. Kevin McCain (2014: ch. 3) defends the view that the only mental states that count as evidence relevant to a belief B are those the believer is currently aware of or disposed to bring to mind when reflecting on the question of whether B is true. Here too there is an emphasis is on accessibility.

What these positions have in common is that they endorse the following evidentialist view:

*EVI*: (I) S's belief B is justified if and only if (a) S has evidence E, (b) B is based on evidence E, (c) B fits evidence E, and (d) S's total evidence does not include defeaters for B. (II) Justification supervenes on (a) one's evidence (all the evidence one has) and (b) the basing relations that hold between one's beliefs and one's evidence. (III) One's evidence consists of one's accessible mental states.<sup>20</sup>

Because of clause (III), EV1 avoids exhibiting the second grade of externalism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See also Feldman (2004 [1988]) where he defends a more restrictive view according to which one's evidence consists of what one is currently aware of.

<sup>19</sup> So, despite the fact that (as I mentioned in note 13 and the text to which it is attached) Conee and Feldman want to define internalism by focusing on the internality of the mental and not on the internality of access, their own evidentialist view is internal on both counts.

<sup>20</sup> As mentioned at the end of Section 1, the focus here (and throughout Sections 2-7) is doxastic justification.

<sup>21</sup> Alston (1989 [1988]) is an externalist who endorses clause (I) and, perhaps, clause (III) of EV1 but not clause (II). (I say "perhaps" in the case of clause (III) because Alston requires access (1989 [1988]: 237) not to one's evidence but to states of the same sort as one's evidential states.) Alston rejects clause (II) because he thinks justification supervenes not solely on the subject's accessible mental states and the basing relations between them but also on facts about whether the grounds for beliefs are reliable indicators of the beliefs based on those grounds (since it is, according to him, these latter facts about reliable indication that determine whether beliefs *fit* the grounds or evidence on which they're based). Alston comes close, then, to endorsing WAI—insofar as he comes close to endorsing clause (III)—so he comes close to avoiding externalism of the second grade and, instead, to endorsing externalism of the first grade only. Insofar as he also endorses clause (I), he also comes close to endorsing a kind of

#### 4. Evidentialism Exhibiting the Second Grade of Externalism

What distinguishes the second grade of externalism from the first grade is its denial of WAI. A simple way to develop an evidentialist view of this kind is to say that the mental states that constitute one's evidence include ones that are not accessible on reflection—i.e., mental states that we are not actually or potentially aware of. So long as we are capable of basing our beliefs on such mental states and so long as our beliefs can fit (and be supported by) such mental states, the following position, which differs from EV1 only in its third clause, counts as an evidentialist view:

*EV2:* (I) S's belief B is justified if and only if (a) S has evidence E, (b) B is based on evidence E, (c) B fits evidence E, and (d) S's total evidence does not include defeaters for B. (II) Justification supervenes on (a) one's evidence (all the evidence one has) and (b) the basing relations that hold between one's beliefs and one's evidence. (III\*) One's evidence consists of one's mental states, including some that are not accessible on reflection.

Does anyone endorse this sort of evidentialism? Perhaps a variant of Timothy Williamson's E=K view could fit this description. Williamson holds the following three theses: evidence consist of propositions not psychological states, knowledge is a mental state, and E=K.<sup>22</sup> If we think of E=K as the claim that one's evidence consists of one's knowledge, then these three statements are inconsistent since evidence is propositional (not psychological or mental) whereas knowledge is a mental state. Propositions are not mental states and if E is the former and K is the latter, it's false that E=K. The usual "solution" to this apparent difficulty is to think of E=K as the claim that the propositions that count as one's evidence are the propositions one

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evidentialism, albeit not the usual kind that endorses a supervenience thesis like clause (II). All this to say that Alston comes close to being an evidentialist exhibiting externalism of the first grade, although not a standard version of such a view, given his rejection of clause (II) of EV1. See note 25 for a brief discussion of a similar view developed by Comesaña.

<sup>22</sup> The first and third of these three theses are defended in Williamson (2000: ch. 9) and the second is defended in Williamson (2000: chs 1-2).

knows. But a variant of the Williamsonian view could insist that evidence is psychological and that it consists of those mental states that are instances of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> On this view, there is an important sense in which one's evidence is not internal in the access sense. Consider you and your demon victim twin to whom things seem exactly as they seem to you—the difference being that your demon victim twin is being deceived in all its perceptual beliefs and in most of its memories given that it came into existence with fake memories matching yours only a few minutes ago. Your demon victim twin doesn't know via perception and memory what you know via perception and memory. It's natural to think that, since your demon victim twin cannot tell on reflection whether it has perceptual and memory knowledge, the perceptual and memory knowledge states you are in do not count as accessible on reflection either. Indeed, because knowledge states are factive, they are often thought of as being external in the access sense. If we grant that knowledge states are not (in general) accessible on reflection, then—because it says that one's evidence consists of all and only one's knowledge states—this variant of the Williamsonian view could be developed in accord with EV2. (Williamson himself suggests that something like clause (II), shared in common by EV1 and EV2, is correct.<sup>24</sup>) Insofar as this view, so developed, says that whether one's beliefs are justified depends on whether they are based on knowledge states rather than on the knowledge-mimicking mental states of a demon victim—and acknowledges that this is something we cannot tell on reflection—it seems to deny WAI and, thereby, to be exhibiting the second grade of externalism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For a response to some of Williamson's reasons for thinking evidence is propositional rather than psychological, see Conee and Feldman (2008: 100-104) and McCain (2014: 13-16).

<sup>24</sup> See Williamson (2000: 2007-8) where he says:

Could belief be *epistemically* justified except by evidence? ... It is far from obvious that any belief is justified in the truth-directed sense without being justified by evidence ... evidence plausibly suffices for all truth-directed justification. ... If we are aiming at the truth, we should proportion our belief to the evidence.

<sup>25</sup> Comesaña (2010) defends what he calls 'evidentialist reliabilism,' some versions of which endorse clauses (I) and (III) of EV2 (since some versions are accessibilist about evidence and some are not). But, like Alston (see note 21), Comesaña's version of evidentialism denies clause (II) because he thinks justification supervenes not solely on the

## 5. Evidentialism Exhibiting the Third Grade of Externalism

It is sufficient for exhibiting the third grade of externalism that a view allows that the following can be true.

*JWE1 (Justification without Evidence, Example 1):* An alien cognizer was designed (by God or evolution) to form beliefs about its environment without the causal mediation of any of the cognizer's mental states. This cognizer was designed to form the belief that there is water nearby when water is, in fact, nearby and, in the normal case for this cognizer, the causal chain leading from the presence of water in its environment to the formation of the belief about water being nearby included (by design) no mental states as causal intermediaries. In forming beliefs in this way, this cognizer is forming beliefs about water in the way that it is supposed to—both in the proper function sense of 'supposed to' and in the epistemic sense of 'supposed to'. As a result, these water beliefs of this cognizer are (epistemically) justified.<sup>26</sup>

According to JWE1, it is possible for a cognizer to have justified beliefs that are not based on mental states of that cognizer. And, given that evidence is to be understood in the psychological sense as consisting of mental states of some kind or another, this means that it is possible for a cognizer to have justified beliefs that are not based on evidence. Clearly, this conflicts with EV2. It also conflicts with SMI, which requires that for *all* cognizers, justification supervenes on one's mental states and the basing relations holding between them.<sup>27</sup> And on natural ways of filling out JWE1, it conflicts with WAI as well, given that facts about proper function, about water in one's environment, and about the causal relations between water in one's environment and one's beliefs are typically not accessible on reflection alone.<sup>28</sup> Thus, a view that endorses the possibility of JWE1 exhibits the third grade of externalism.

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subject's mental states and the basing relations between them but also on facts about whether the process type *producing a belief B based on evidence E* (where B is the belief whose justification is at issue and E is the evidence on which B is based) is reliable (since it is, according to him, these latter facts about the reliability of such processes that determine whether beliefs *fit* the evidence on which they're based). Versions of evidentialist reliabilism that deny accessibilism are also instances of evidentialism that exhibit the second grade of externalism. Versions of evidentialist reliabilism that affirm accessibilism are, like Alston's view discussed in note 21, instances of evidentialism that exhibit the first grade of externalism only—though, like Alston's view, these versions of evidentialist reliabilism differ from standard versions of evidentialism by denying clause (II) of EV1.

<sup>26</sup> This example was originally proposed in Bergmann (2006: 64).

<sup>27</sup> See note 15 for a statement of SMI.

<sup>28</sup> See note 11 for a statement of WAI.

Can such a view also be an evidentialist view? I think so. Here's an example of a view that shares (III) in common with EV1 but differs from both EV1 and EV2 in its first and second clauses as well as in the addition of a fourth clause:

*EV3: (I\*) If S is human, then S's belief B is justified if and only if (a) S has evidence E, (b) B is based on evidence E, (c) B fits evidence E, and (d) S's total evidence does not include defeaters for B. (II\*) Justification for the beliefs of any human S supervenes on (a) S's evidence (all the evidence S has) and (b) the basing relations that hold between S's beliefs and S's evidence.<sup>29</sup> (III) One's evidence consists of one's accessible mental states. (IV) JWE1 is possible.*

The following points provide a fuller explanation of EV3:

- (1) Justification for a cognizer's beliefs depends on what counts as proper function for that cognizer—i.e., on what it's design plan is.
- (2) Proper function for humans in fact requires (a) that their beliefs are based on and fit their evidence *and* (b) that what counts as a fitting response to evidence is just the sort of thing that standard evidentialists (and the rest of us) typically think counts as a fitting response to evidence (for humans).<sup>30</sup>
- (3) Proper function for a cognizer is, of necessity, tied to that cognizer's natural kind.
- (4) Every human is, of necessity, of the natural kind *human*.

The reason that clause (I\*) of EV3 is true is that, as (1) says, justification depends on proper function and, as (2) says, proper function for humans requires that their beliefs are based on and fit their evidence, just as is specified in (I\*). The reason that clause (II\*) of EV3 is true is that if proper function for a human cognizer, S, *in fact* makes the justification of S's beliefs depend on what evidence S has and on the basing relations holding between S's beliefs and S's evidence,<sup>31</sup> then—given (3) and (4)—it's true *of necessity* that the justification of S's beliefs depends on what evidence S has and on the basing relations holding between S's beliefs and S's evidence.

The reason that clause (IV) of EV3 is compatible with clauses (I\*) and (II\*) is that, as (1) says,

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<sup>29</sup> What (II\*) is intended to say is that, in cases where S is human, if you hold fixed that it is S's beliefs we're talking about and you also hold fixed S's evidence and the basing relations that hold between S's beliefs and S's evidence, then you will thereby be holding fixed the facts about which (if any) of S's beliefs are justified.

<sup>30</sup> Three things are worth noting here. First, although philosophers disagree about what counts as a fitting response to evidence (for humans), there is also a lot of agreement on this matter and the point here is to focus on this wide agreement. Second, although this is what proper function requires for humans, it isn't what proper function requires for all possible cognizers. Third, the idea that fittingness depends on proper function is a view I explore and defend in Bergmann (2006: ch. 5).

<sup>31</sup> In part by determining which beliefs fit which evidence.

justification depends on proper function and the design plan for humans can differ from the design plan for alien cognizers of the sort described in JWE1.

In virtue of clauses (I\*) and (II\*), EV3 (plausibly) counts as an evidentialist view. In virtue of sharing clause (III) with EV1, EV3 is more similar to standard evidentialism (in one important respect) than is EV2. And in virtue of clause (IV), EV3 exhibits the third grade of externalism. Hence, EV3 is an evidentialist view exhibiting the third grade of externalism.

## 6. Evidentialism Exhibiting the Fourth Grade of Externalism

According to EV3, although it is possible (in the way suggested in JWE1) for justification not to be determined by evidence or the mental or what is accessible, it is also the case that for some actual cognizers (i.e., humans) justification *is* determined by evidence and the mental and what is accessible. In this way, EV3 rejects the fourth grade of externalism. For the fourth grade of externalism says not merely (as does the third grade) that for *some* person S, the justification of S's beliefs does not supervene on S's mental states and the basing relations holding between them, but in addition that this failure of supervenience holds for *any* person.

It is sufficient for exhibiting the fourth grade of externalism that a view allows that the following could be true.

*JWE2 (Justification without Evidence, Example 2):* Each possible cognizer is such that it could be designed or re-designed by God to form theistic beliefs *because* God exists—not due to the causal mediation of any of that cognizer's mental states but rather due to God directly causing that person to believe that God exists. (In particular, it is possible for a cognizer to at first have a design plan that does *not* include this feature and for that cognizer to come to have—by being re-designed—a design plan that *does* include this feature, without changing the fact that it remains a cognizer. Moreover, it is possible for a cognizer after being re-designed to be identical to the cognizer before being re-designed because the cognizer's design plan is among the features of a cognizer that can change over time.<sup>32</sup>) In forming beliefs in this way, this cognizer

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<sup>32</sup> In considering whether design plans can be contingent features of cognizers, it's worth keeping in mind that design plans for cognizers typically don't specify a response for *every possible* circumstance in which the cognizer might find itself. So a design plan that included more details than a previous one—by focusing on more

would be forming beliefs about God in the way that it is (given its design or re-design) supposed to—both in the proper function sense of ‘supposed to’ and in the epistemic sense of ‘supposed to’. As a result, these theistic beliefs of this cognizer would be (epistemically) justified.<sup>33</sup>

According to JWE2, it is possible for *any* cognizer to have justified beliefs that are not based on mental states of that cognizer. And, given that evidence is to be understood in the psychological sense as consisting of mental states of some kind or another, this means that it is possible, for *any* cognizer, to have justified beliefs that are not based on evidence. Clearly, this conflicts with EV2, EV3, SMI, and WMI.<sup>34</sup> And on natural ways of filling out JWE2, it conflicts with WAI as well.<sup>35</sup> Thus, a view that endorses the possibility of JWE2 exhibits the fourth grade of externalism.

Is there a version of evidentialism that goes beyond EV3 by exhibiting the fourth grade of externalism? Again, I think there is. Consider the following view, which shares clause (III) in common with EV1 and EV3 but differs from EV3 in its fourth clause and from EV1-EV3 in its first and second clauses as well as in the addition of its fifth clause:

*EV4: (I\*\*) If S is a human in condition C, then S’s belief B is justified if and only if (a) S has evidence E, (b) B is based on evidence E, (c) B fits evidence E, and (d) S’s total evidence does not include defeaters for B. (II\*\*) Justification for the beliefs of humans in condition C supervenes on (a) S’s evidence (all the evidence S has), (b) the basing relations that hold between S’s beliefs and S’s evidence, and (c) on S’s being a human in condition C. (III) One’s evidence consists of one’s accessible mental states. (IV\*) JWE2*

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circumstances (including ones the cognizer hadn’t been in before but that it will be in in the future)—counts as a new design plan. For related discussion, see Plantinga (1993: 22-4) where he distinguishes between design plans and max plans (or mini-max plans).

<sup>33</sup> This sort of example was originally proposed in Bergmann (2006: 52 and 63-4). Note that the proposal here isn’t *merely* that it’s possible for God to design or redesign cognizers to come to have beliefs in this way. In addition, the proposal is that in believing in accord with this design plan, such beliefs would be justified. This is compatible with it’s also being the case that there are some plans for belief formation that couldn’t be plans for *justified* belief formation, so that even if God made beings that formed beliefs in accord with those design plans, those beliefs wouldn’t be justified. Plausibly, a design plan that required beings to often recognize but always ignore defeating evidence for one’s beliefs and to hold those beliefs anyway, would be a design plan that does not yield justified beliefs, even if the believer is *supposed to* hold those beliefs (in the proper function sense of ‘supposed to’) and even if (unbeknownst to these beings) the environment for which these beings were designed and in which the designer always placed them was such that all recognized defeaters they encountered and ignored were misleading in ways the beings couldn’t detect. See Bergmann (2006: ch. 6) for further discussion.

<sup>34</sup> See notes 15 and 16 for statements of WMI and SMI.

<sup>35</sup> Again, see note 11 for a statement of WAI.

is possible.<sup>36</sup> (V) As far as we can tell, all humans have always been, currently are, and are likely to remain in condition C until they die.

I won't describe condition C in any detail but it includes the following: (i) conditions most widely acknowledged to be conditions in which humans have always been, currently are, and are likely to remain until they die, (ii) the falsity of any claims that God has designed or re-designed any human to form the belief that God exists in the way described in JWE2 (or to form other beliefs in similar ways—i.e., ways that don't involve believing in response to one's evidence), and (iii) *not* having one's standard design plan revised.

The comments just made about condition C, together with the following points, provide a fuller explanation of EV4:

- (1) Justification for a cognizer's beliefs depends on what counts as proper function for that cognizer—i.e., on what it's design plan is.
- (2\*) Proper function for humans *in condition C* in fact requires (a) that their beliefs are based on and fit their evidence *and* (b) that what counts as a fitting response to evidence is just the sort of thing that standard evidentialists (and the rest of us) typically think counts as a fitting response to evidence (for humans).<sup>37</sup>
- (5) The design plan for a cognizer can change.

The reason that clause (I\*\*) of EV4 is true is that, as (1) says, justification depends on proper function and, as (2\*) says, proper function for humans in condition C requires that their beliefs are based on and fit their evidence, just as is specified in (I\*\*) of EV4. The reason that clause (II\*\*) of EV4 is true is that (II\*\*) follows from (I\*\*) together with the fact that being in

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<sup>36</sup> As an objection to including in EV4 the claim that JWE2 is possible, one might argue that someone in whom God directly caused the belief that God exists would be likely to have a defeater for that belief arising as one thinks to oneself "that belief seemed to come out of nowhere and I don't seem to have any good reason to think it's true". (See BonJour (1985: 42) for suggestions along these lines.). As was mentioned in note 33, I think this is an important objection insofar as I think believed defeaters are defeaters, regardless of a cognizer's design plan (see Bergmann (2006: ch. 6) for further details). But what matters here are the answers to the following two questions: (i) would the person in whom God directly caused the belief that God exists in fact have such potentially defeating thoughts arise? (ii) is it the case that they epistemically should have such potentially defeating thoughts arise? If the answer to both questions is 'no' in a particular case, then these worries about defeat aren't a problem in that case. (See Bergmann (2006: ch. 6) for further discussion of the importance of these two questions.) And given that these possible cases described in JWE2 include God's involvement in human belief formation and in the human design plan, there's no reason to think that the answer will not be 'no' to both questions in many possible cases of this kind.

<sup>37</sup> Although this is what proper function requires for humans in condition C, it isn't what proper function requires for all possible cognizers or for humans in all possible conditions. See also note 30.

condition C involves having the standard human design plan, which dictates which beliefs fit which evidence.<sup>38</sup> The reason that clause (IV\*) of EV4 is compatible with clauses (I\*\*) and (II\*\*) is that, as (1) says, justification depends on proper function and, as (5) and the description of condition C indicate, the design plan for any human *not* in condition C can differ from the design plan for humans in condition C (i.e., their standard design plan), including in the ways described in JWE2.

But does EV4 really count as a version of evidentialism? After all, it's focus is not on *all* beliefs or even *all possible human* beliefs. And the claim is that justification for the beliefs in question (i.e., human beliefs in condition C) supervenes not on one's evidence and the relevant basing relations but on those things together with facts pertaining to whether those beliefs are *human beliefs in condition C* (which includes the cognizer in question having the standard human design plan). And on top of all that, it isn't *asserted* with any confidence that clauses (I\*\*) and (II\*\*) of EV4 apply to all actual human beliefs; the claim instead is just that *as far as we can tell* they apply to all actual human beliefs, suggesting that we may, at any moment, discover that they don't.

All of this is true. Nevertheless, in virtue of sharing clause (III) with EV1, EV4 (like EV3) is more similar to standard evidentialism (in one important respect) than is EV2. And, most importantly, the combination of clauses (I\*\*), (II\*\*), and (V) of EV4—understood as developed above—implies that, as far as we can tell, the following evidentialist insight is true:

*The Evidentialist Insight:* the justification of all actual human beliefs in fact depends on their fitting the believer's overall evidence, including the evidence on which they're based.

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<sup>38</sup> Hence, if we hold fixed that S is a human in condition C (as the supervenience claim in (II\*\*) of EV4 recommends), we thereby hold fixed facts about which beliefs fit which evidence.

These points together are arguably enough for EV4 to count as a version of evidentialism.<sup>39</sup> And, in virtue of clause (IV\*), EV4 exhibits the fourth grade of externalism. Hence, EV4 is, plausibly, an evidentialist view exhibiting the fourth grade of externalism.

### 7. Are Any of These Evidentialist Views True?

I tentatively endorse EV4. My reasons for endorsing it are the following. First, I endorse the proper functionalist account of justification on which it depends—i.e., point (1) from the previous two sections. In Bergmann (2006: chs. 3 and 5), I defend this account and argue for its superiority over the evidentialism of the EV1-sort. I won't repeat those arguments here. Second, I'm very sympathetic to the Evidentialist Insight mentioned at the end of the previous section. Standard evidentialists (those of the EV1-sort) find the Evidentialist Insight obvious on its face. That is, they think it is obvious that every actual justified human belief *in fact* fits the believer's overall evidence (including the evidence on which it is based) and that every actual human belief *epistemically should* fit the believer's overall evidence, including the evidence on which it is based.<sup>40</sup> While I don't find this as obvious as standard evidentialists find it, I do find it plausible, largely because, in thinking about all actual cases of justified human belief that come to mind, none of them strikes me as being a clear case of a belief that is not based on evidence

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<sup>39</sup> They also explain why views like EV1 can *seem* true even if they're false and EV4 (as developed above) is in fact the truth.

<sup>40</sup> In their (2004: 1), Conee and Feldman say:

...the two of us saw evidentialism as sufficiently obvious to be in little need of defense. When we noticed to our amazement that prominent contemporary epistemologists were defending theories that seemed incompatible with evidentialism, this prompted us to write our first paper explicitly on this topic, "Evidentialism" ... We have been defending it ever since. We remain mildly amazed.

McCain (2014: 2), mentioning this passage, says he shares their amazement. In the quoted passage, Conee and Feldman are speaking of something like EV1, which is *stronger* than (and entails) the Evidentialist Insight.

consisting of accessible mental states.<sup>41</sup> While I differ from standard evidentialists in thinking that cases of justified belief like those described in JWE1 and JWE2 are *possible*, I don't think they are *actual* (for humans).

I say that I “tentatively” endorse EV4. This is because I'm quite open to being persuaded that there are sufficiently clear cases of actual (rather than merely possible) justified human beliefs that are not based on evidence (or on any mental states at all—accessible or not). Thus, I take quite seriously alleged cases of clearly justified actual human beliefs that are not based on evidence, cases such as (i) the one proposed by Andrew Moon (2012) of the person who knows (and, therefore, justifiedly believes) the law of non-contradiction while dreamlessly sleeping without any mental states (such as intuitions or intellectual seemings or memory impressions) that could count as evidence for that belief and (ii) the cases of forgotten evidence proposed by Alvin Goldman (1999, 2011), where a person holds a belief (justifiedly) but no longer has any idea what evidence led her to that belief. However, I also take seriously replies to these alleged counterexamples—e.g., replies to (i) by McCain (2014: 146-9 & 2015b) and replies to (ii) by Conee and Feldman (2001, 2011) and McCain (2015a)—and find them persuasive enough to conclude that we don't have any *clear* cases of actual justified human beliefs that are not based on evidence.

If I became persuaded that there are sufficiently clear cases of actual (rather than merely possible) justified human beliefs that are not based on evidence (or on any mental states at all), then I might—depending on what the cases were that persuaded me to give up clause (V) of EV4 or (2\*)—try to continue endorsing an even weaker version of evidentialism, one that restricted the application of the Evidentialist Insight to *paradigm cases* of actual justified human beliefs.

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<sup>41</sup> Though, of course, I don't find standard evidentialism of the EV1-sort plausible. However, because I find the Evidentialist Insight plausible, I can see why it's tempting (even if, in my view, mistaken) to endorse EV1.

But if I became persuaded that even that was false, I'd give up evidentialism altogether. For now, however, I cautiously endorse externalist evidentialism of the EV4 variety.<sup>42</sup>

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