

On An Argument Against Immediate Justification

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Introduction

In his paper, Pryor argues for the existence of immediate justification and defends it against what he calls “the master argument for coherentism.” In this paper, I want to present and evaluate a different argument against one kind of immediate justification. My conclusion will be that, although the argument does not conclusively establish that there is no immediate justification in the cases to which it applies, it does show that the existence of that kind of immediate justification is incompatible with a set of widely accepted principles.

Where Does Immediate Justification Come From?

Pryor defines “immediate justification” as follows:

When your justification to believe P does not come from your justification to believe other propositions, I will call it “immediate.”

The phrase “coming from” sounds innocuously prosaic, but we will see that it must be functioning in the definition of immediate justification as a technical term.

Right after presenting this characterization, Pryor makes five clarifications, two of which will be particularly important for our discussion. First, to put it in a common terminology, Pryor is talking about propositional rather than doxastic justification. Roughly speaking, propositional justification has to do with which propositions you are justified in believing, whether you believe them or not (and if you do believe them, whether you do so for good reasons or not); doxastic justification, on the other hand, has to do with whether your mental state consisting in believing a proposition is justified. We will be concerned with both propositional and doxastic justification. Second, Pryor believes that “justification is usually defeasible.” So, when he is talking about immediate

justification, he is talking about prima facie justification, which can turn into all things considered justification if it is not defeated.

Pryor thinks that the best defense of the existence of immediate justification comes not from some theoretical argument such as a version of the regress argument, but rather from consideration of cases. He thus gives examples of what he takes to be cases of immediate justification:

- I feel tired, and I am thereby justified in believing that I feel tired.
- I have a headache, and I am thereby justified in believing that I have a headache.
- I raise my arm to scare a fly, and I am thereby justified in believing that I raise my arm to scare a fly.
- I imagine my grandmother sitting in her kitchen, and I am thereby justified in believing that I am imagining my grandmother sitting in her kitchen.
- I think about ways for a domino piece to cover two spaces on a chessboard, and I am thereby justified in believing that the only way to wholly cover two spaces on the board is to place the domino horizontally or vertically.

Pryor thinks that in each of these cases my justification for believing the relevant propositions does not come from my justification for believing any other proposition. A crucial question in what follows is: where does the justification come from? A good way to approach that question is to recall Pryor's discussion of the master argument for coherentism. The version of the argument that Pryor settles on is the following:

Premise Principle: The only things that can justify a belief that P are other states that assertively represent propositions, and those propositions have to be ones that could be used as premises in an argument for P. They have to stand in some kind of inferential role to P: they have to imply it or inductively support it or something like that.

Only Beliefs: Only beliefs (or other states that are epistemically like beliefs) represent propositions assertively.

Therefore,

Only beliefs (or other states that are epistemically like beliefs) can be justifiers.

Pryor points out that there are reasons to doubt both of the premises in this argument. Against the Only Beliefs premise, many epistemologists hold that experiences are states that can represent propositions assertively without being

epistemically like beliefs (that is to say, without needing—or indeed, allowing—to be justified in order to justify). When I have an experience as of hands in front of me, my experience assertively represents the proposition that there are hands in front of me, and that proposition could obviously be used as an argument for the conclusion that there are hands in front of me (although to call that an argument is to stretch the terminology to uncomfortable levels). Pryor also argues against the Premise Principle. I won't be concerned here with the details of Pryor's argument against the Premise Principle, but I will be concerned with exactly what aspect of the Premise Principle Pryor is rejecting.

Let us now return to Pryor's initial examples of immediately justified beliefs. Remember our question: if the justification in those examples doesn't come from justification for believing anything else, where does it come from? One might be tempted to think that Pryor's answer is the following: my justification for believing that I have a headache is my headache; my justification for believing that I feel tired is my feeling of tiredness, etc. That is to say, in each of those cases, my justification comes from a state that doesn't assertively represent any content. Note well: the idea here would be to say that my justification comes from the state itself, not from the fact that I am in that state, or from the event of my being in that state: it is my headache that justifies me in believing that I have a headache, not the fact that I have a headache or my having the headache.

I said that this is what one might expect Pryor to say, but it is not what he actually says. What he actually says is the following:

Many foundationalists believe in justification-making facts that violate that constraint. For instance, many foundationalists want to allow facts about what sensations you are having, or facts about what mental activities you are engaging in, to count as justifiers.

According to Pryor here, it is not the states themselves that are the justifiers, but rather the fact that the subject is in such and such a state (or the event of the subject's being in such and such a state—I won't distinguish between these in what follows).¹ According to this view, for instance, facts about the existence of certain experiences are immediate *prima facie* justifiers for belief in the propositions that are the contents of such experiences. Thus, the fact that I am having an experience with the content that there is a hand in front of me is an immediate *prima facie* justifier for the proposition that there is a hand in front of me. It is for this kind of view that I now want to raise a serious problem.

¹For relevant discussion, see Turri (2009).

The Problem

The problem actually arises not only for that kind of view, but for a much larger class. To be susceptible to the problem, a view must satisfy four principles (eventually we will add a fifth), all of which are in fact widely accepted.

The first principle in question I will call “Inductivism:”

Inductivism: A justifier J may provide justification for a subject S to believe that P even if J doesn’t entail that P.

Notice that, to satisfy Inductivism non-trivially, a view must hold that, at least some times, justifiers can be propositions (or facts or events, to the extent that we can make sense of the idea that facts and events can stand in logical relations to propositions).² The view according to which facts about mental states can be justifiers satisfies Inductivism. To be sure, there will be cases where a justifier does entail the proposition that it justifies—for instance, that I have a headache may be where my justification for believing that I have a headache comes from. But there will be cases where the entailment fails—such as the one already mentioned where the fact that I have an experience with the content that there is a hand in front of me justifies me in believing that there is a hand in front of me. Of course, the proposition which is the content of the experience does entail the proposition that I am justified in believing (they are indeed the same proposition); but, according to the view we are now interested in, it is not the content of the experience, but the fact that I have it, which justifies me—and the fact that I have an experience does not entail that it is veridical. So, someone who believes in the existence of this kind of immediate justification will be committed to Inductivism. The converse, of course, doesn’t hold: one may be committed to Inductivism even if one doesn’t believe in the existence of immediate justification at all, let alone this specific kind of immediate justification.

Second, a principle of Closure:

Closure: If S has justification for believing that P and competently deduces Q from P, then S has justification for believing that Q.

Closure principles have been at the center of the epistemological discussion for a while now.³ This is not the place for further substantive discussion about

²What about the view that it is the states themselves which are the justifiers? Does that view satisfy Inductivism? On the face of it it doesn’t, because states cannot enter into logical relations with propositions. Some philosophers may wish to hold that they do, in which case we would have to look into the details of their theories to see whether they satisfy Inductivism or not. Some of the issues here resemble those raised by “Sellars’s dilemma”—see Sellars (1956).

³See chapters X and X for Dretske and Hawthorne on Closure.

them, but I will make two points. First, I want to register my sympathy with defenders of closure principles against their opponents. Nozick (1981) was right when he said (something to the effect) that we may quibble about the precise formulation of an exceptionless closure principle, but it is hard to deny that something like Closure must be right. (Nozick famously went on to deny closure, but not on the basis of quibbling with the formulation of the principle, but rather on the basis of an analysis of knowledge.) Second, to generate the problem it is not necessary to hold that a principle like Closure holds with full generality. It is sufficient to hold that, in many particular cases, someone who is justified in believing a proposition P by a justifier which doesn't entail P may competently perform a deduction from P to Q and thereby become justified in believing Q.

To introduce the third principle, consider the following scenario. Suppose that I throw a fair die and hide the result. I then tell you that the die landed either on 1 or on 2. That gives you some evidence to believe that the die landed on 1, of course—you now have more justification than you did before for believing that the die landed on 1. And that the die landed on 1 entails that it didn't land on 2. But think how absurd it would be if you reasoned this way: "I am now more justified than I was before in believing that the die landed on 1, and that the die landed on 1 entails that it didn't land on 2. Therefore, I am now more justified than I was before in believing that the die didn't land on 2." Why would this reasoning be so absurd? One reason (maybe not the only one) is that the proposition that the die landed on 1 is a mere lemma. All the justification you have for believing that proposition comes from your justification for believing that the die landed either on 1 or on 2. Of course, that the die landed on 1 or on 2 does not give you more justification than you had before for believing that it didn't land on 2—on the contrary, it gives you more justification than you had before for believing that it did land on 2. Now, if you had independent justification for believing that the die landed on 1, then of course you might well be justified in believing that it didn't land on 2. But given that all your justification for believing that the die landed on 1 comes from your justification for believing that it landed either on 1 or on 2, and given that this latter proposition does not justify you in believing that it didn't land on 2, then you are not justified in believing that it didn't land on 2. In slogan form, mere lemmas do not have any justifying power of their own. In principle form:

Mere Lemmas: If S's justification for believing that P comes entirely from Q and Q does not justify S in believing R, then P does not justify S in believing R.⁴

Finally, suppose that P entails Q. Could Q then justify you in rejecting P? Hardly so. That Q is true is what would happen if P were true, so how can the truth of Q justify you in rejecting P? Our fourth principle enshrines this idea:

⁴Weisberg (2010) proposes a similar principle, which he calls "No-Feedback."

Entailment: If P entails Q, then Q cannot justify S in believing not-P.

Both Mere Lemmas and the Entailment principle are to be understood as restricted to contingent propositions—otherwise they would have counterexamples that are irrelevant for our purposes.

As I said, many theories accept these four principles. Moreover, there seem to be very good reasons to accept these four principles. I have given brief defenses of each, and more will be provided below, but I think that they enjoy a great deal of initial plausibility. Unfortunately, they are incompatible with each other. There is a proposition P of a certain kind such that Inductivism and Closure entail you might be justified in believing P, whereas Entailment and Mere Lemmas entail that you can't be justified in believing P.

Let us start by assuming that the fact that you are having an experience with a certain content (let us say, that there is a hand in front of you, and let's call this fact E) immediately justifies you in believing a certain proposition (let us say, that there is indeed a hand in front of you, "H" for short). As noted above, this case satisfies Inductivism non-trivially, for E does not entail H. Now, H entails the proposition that either H or not-E. Notice that this is equivalent to the proposition that it is not the case that E and not-H, and also equivalent to the material conditional that if E, then H. Let us suppose that you notice the entailment and competently deduce the proposition that either H or not-E. Closure now entails that you are justified in believing this proposition—although, as noted above, nothing as strong as Closure is required to hold that you are indeed now justified in believing it. Now, a natural question to ask at this point is: what justifies you in believing that H or not-E? Or, to put it in Pryor's terminology, where does your justification for believing H or not-E come from? There seem to be only two candidates in the offing: your justifier is either E or H itself (later I re-examine the assumption that these are the only two possible justifiers in this case). Take the latter option first. We are assuming that all your justification for believing H comes from E. The Mere Lemmas principle then entails that H can justify you in believing only things which E itself justifies you in believing. So, if you are justified at all in believing H or not-E, it must be because E itself justifies you. But notice that the negation of H or not-E is (equivalent to) E and not-H, which entails E. Therefore, according to the Entailment principle, E cannot justify you in believing H or not-E. So, according to the four principles under consideration, you are justified and it is not the case that you are justified in believing H or not-E. Therefore, the four principles are mutually inconsistent.⁵

⁵Inductivism is a possibility principle: it says that it is possible for there to be a case of inductive justification. Together with Closure, it entails that it is possible for a subject to be justified in believing H or not-E when E is her evidence for H. But (subject to the provisos discussed in the next section) Entailment and No Lemmas entail that there is no such possible case.

Several variations of this problem have received attention in the recent literature. Something like it was proposed as a problem exclusive to reliabilism by Fumerton (1996) and Vogel (2000), who called it the “bootstrapping problem.” Fumerton and Vogel complained that reliabilism allows one to “bootstrap” perceptual knowledge into knowledge that perception is reliable. Something like it is also behind Wright’s worries with Moorean approaches to solving the skeptical problem (see, for instance, Wright (2007)). White (2006) also marshals a version of the problem against theories such as Pryor (2000), which hold that experience can give us immediate justification. Cohen (2002) argued that, properly understood, the problem afflicts not only reliabilism, but any theory which admits that we can have knowledge on the basis of a source without knowing that the source is reliable—he called it the “easy knowledge problem.” Independently of Cohen, Huemer (2001) argued that the problem is even more general, and it affects any theory which admits that there can be justification and knowledge on the basis of non-entailing evidence—he called it the “problem of defeasible justification.” Pryor (forthcoming) argues that White’s problem for dogmatism actually applies to any “credulist” theory—any theory according to which there can be what Pryor calls “non-quotidian” undermining. Recently, Sharon and Spectre (forthcoming) present a similar argument, but aimed against Closure.⁶ I cannot here present a detailed comparison between the problems presented by these authors and my own. Suffice it to say that I agree with Cohen, Huemer and Pryor that there is a problem in the vicinity which affects a great variety of epistemological theories. Indeed, I think it is a virtue of my presentation of the problem that it reveals just how widely it applies. I disagree with Wright and Sharon and Spectre that the solution to the problems lies in denying some version of Closure. I also disagree with White, Cohen and again Wright that the solution lies in claiming that we have a priori knowledge of the proposition in question. I turn now to precisely this issue.

The Neo-Rationalist Gambit and Immediate Justification

A crucial step in the argument that the four principles are mutually inconsistent is the claim that, in the cases under consideration, your justification for believing H or not-E can only come from two sources: either from E, or from H. Some philosophers will deny this. They will say that you are a priori justified in believing that proposition—that is to say, you are justified but not on the basis of any empirical justifier such as H or E. Cohen (2010), for instance, holds a view of this sort and presents it as a solution to the easy knowledge problem. According to Cohen, given that E justifies H, a subject can assume E, defeasibly derive H and then close the assumption by concluding that if E then H. The fact that this defeasible suppositional reasoning is easily available to any subject

⁶I reply to Sharon and Spectre in Comesaña (forthcoming).

is what gives them a priori justification for believing that H or not-E, and so Cohen will block the argument presented in the previous section precisely at the point where we said that your justifiers for that proposition can only be E or H. Wedgwood (2012) holds a similar position. Wright (2004) (2004) and White (2006) also think that you have a priori justification for believing such propositions, but do not hold that what gives you this a priori justification is the kind of defeasible suppositional reasoning that Cohen advocates.

Is this neo-rationalist position (neo-rationalist because it posits a priori justification for contingent propositions) a way of denying the existence of immediate justification? Not without additional assumptions. One can hold on to the claim that it is E alone which provides me with justification for believing H and also claim that I have a priori justification for believing H or not-E. One way of implementing this idea is by saying that it is E by itself which justifies me in believing H, whereas it is this very fact (that E justifies me in believing H), a fact which obtains independently of whether E itself obtains, that justifies me in believing H or not-E. But this position is not very stable. Remember that, according to Pryor, your justification for believing a proposition is immediate if and only if it doesn't "come from" your justification for believing any other proposition. According to the neo-rationalist position, whenever some fact F gives you justification for believing a proposition P, you already have justification for believing the material conditional if F then P. If so, whenever you are justified in believing P on the basis of F you will have available to you a different justification—one which depends not only on F but also on the conditional if F then P. The justification in question will in addition be logically stronger—it will entail that P. This doesn't mean, of course, that it is epistemically stronger, but it is nevertheless remarkable that, according to neo-rationalists, whenever there is immediate justification for a proposition there is also non-immediate justification for it.

Of course, the friend of immediate justification is free to hold that even though you have justification for believing this conditional, your justification for believing the consequent "comes from" just the antecedent. This response, however, only highlights the obscurity in the phrase "comes from." If we were talking about doxastic justification, there would be a natural explanation for the phrase: your doxastic justification for believing a proposition (if indeed you are doxastically justified) comes from whatever you based your belief on. Presumably, there is a fact of the matter about what your mental state of believing a proposition is based on, and we can appeal to this fact in explaining the phrase "comes from." However, we are talking here about propositional justification, and no natural explanation of the phrase is available in this context. What determines whether your justification for believing P comes from (in part) the conditional or not? Perhaps one could try to argue for the claim that it doesn't by saying that you would still be justified in believing P even if you were not justified in believing in the conditional. But remember that, according to the neo-rationalist, justification for the conditional will be available whenever the antecedent justifies the consequent, and so the counterfactual in question

will have an impossible antecedent. Many people believe that this makes the counterfactual trivially true. Alternatively, one could try arguing that what explains why you are justified in believing P in the circumstances is primarily F , and the conditional is just icing on the cake. Some such explanation, in any case, is indeed needed if one is to reconcile the neo-rationalist position with the existence of immediate justification.

Whatever the prospects for a reconciliation of neo-rationalism with the existence of immediate justification, I will next argue that neo-rationalism cannot solve the problem we are interested in.

Grounding

The neo-rationalist denies that E and H are the only possible justifiers for H or not- E in the cases with which we are concerned. The position allows us to say the following: when you concluded that H or not- E based on your competent deduction from H , you didn't acquire any justification that you didn't have before. You were already justified in believing that proposition, and so the appearance of pulling yourself by your own bootstraps is neutralized. You would be pulling yourself by your own bootstraps if you were to gain justification to believe H or not- E by following that procedure, but you do not gain anything. This way of formulating the neo-rationalist position allows us to see that it is indeed about propositional justification. For instance, you need not engage in the suppositional reasoning that, according to Cohen, gives you justification for believing H or not- E ; and you need not avail yourself of the justification that according to Wright is yours "by default." Nevertheless, that justification is there available to you, and does give you propositional justification even if you do not ground your belief in it.

Consider now a subject who doesn't avail himself of that a priori justification. For all we know, this subject doesn't even reflect on the proposition that H or not- E before he acquires evidence E . Let us further suppose that he does indeed come to believe H , and it is indeed E which justifies him in so believing. Now he goes ahead and competently deduces H or not- E from H . Is the subject then justified in believing that proposition? The question, of course, is ambiguous between the following two: (i) does the subject have propositional justification for believing that H or not- E ?; (ii) does the subject have doxastic justification for believing H or not- E ?

It is crucial, in considering the answers to those questions, to reflect on the relationship between propositional and doxastic justification. Suppose that E gives me propositional justification for believing H . Suppose now that I do in fact believe H on the basis of E , and that nothing out of the ordinary is going on. Then, I am doxastically justified in believing H . Conversely, if I am doxastically justified in believing that H on the basis of E , then E must give me propositional justification for believing P . True, the clause that nothing out of the ordinary

is going on may well hide interesting issues, but they are not issues that will affect our argument. I therefore propose the following principle:

Grounding: If S believes that Q based on P, then S is doxastically justified in believing that Q if and only if P provides propositional justification for S to believe that Q.

We should also distinguish two different versions of Closure, one applying to propositional and the other to doxastic justification:

Propositional Closure: If S is doxastically justified in believing that P and competently deduces Q from P, then S is doxastically justified in believing that Q on the basis of P.

Doxastic Closure: If S is doxastically justified in believing that P and competently deduces Q from P, then S has propositional justification for believing that Q.

Notice that, as I am understanding the Closure principles, the justification in question in the antecedent can only refer to doxastic justification—one may well notice that Q follows from P, but one can hardly deduce Q from P unless one already believes P.⁷ Principles similar to Doxastic Closure sometimes go under the name of “transmission” principles—but I do not want to commit myself on how closely related the different transmission principles and my Doxastic Closure are to each other.

Let us now revisit our sample case. Given Inductivism and Grounding, you are doxastically justified in believing H. Now, according to Doxastic Closure, you are then doxastically justified in believing H or not-E. You believe H or not-E on the basis of H, and so Grounding entails that H must provide you with propositional justification for believing H or not-E. But, according to Mere Lemmas, that can only happen if E provides you with propositional justification for believing H or not-E, and according to the Entailment principle it cannot. Hence, the problem reappears.⁸

To recap: the original problem arises from the incompatibility of Inductivism, Closure, Mere Lemmas and Entailment, plus the assumption that only E or H can justify you in believing H or not-E. Neo-rationalism challenges this assumption, positing a priori propositional justification for believing that proposition. But close attention to whether doxastic justification is possible in those cases shows that the problem can be reinstated: Inductivism, Doxastic Closure, Mere Lemmas, Entailment and Grounding are mutually incompatible, and this time neo-rationalism has nothing to say about the problem. The existence of

⁷The reader may take the comment in the text as an indication of how I intend to use “deduce.”

⁸For a similar argument, see Silins (2005).

a priori propositional justification for believing a proposition is irrelevant to whether a subject who doesn't avail himself of that justification is doxastically justified in believing that proposition.

Options

Let me now consider the prospects for denying each of the principles as a way out of the problem. Some philosophers have proposed that we reject Closure. For instance, Dretske (1970) and Nozick (1981) proposed theories of knowledge according to which closure principles for knowledge fail. Under plausible assumptions about the connection between knowledge and justification (plausible although, notably, not shared by Nozick and Dretske themselves), that means that our Closure fails. Most philosophers have taken these failures of closure principles to be powerful arguments against those theories, however. Other philosophers (notably, Wright) have held that although Propositional Closure is true, (something like) Doxastic Closure is false. As we saw, Wright concedes that if you are justified in believing H then you are also justified in believing H or not- E , but thinks that the justification for believing this latter proposition does not come from your justification for believing H —it is rather available to you a priori. As far as I can tell, however, this combination of accepting Closure but denying transmission simply ignores the complications that arise when dealing with doxastic justification. According to Wright, you may well be doxastically justified in believing a proposition P , competently deduce Q from P , and yet fail to be doxastically justified in believing Q (let us suppose that you don't avail yourself of the propositional justification for believing the Q in question available to you a priori, relying instead only on your impeccable deduction from P). Finally, whatever one thinks about Doxastic Closure, we must remember that, to generate the problem, we need not rely on any general Closure principle, but rather it is sufficient to hold that in particular cases a competent deduction from H to H or not- E can give you doxastic justification for believing this latter proposition.

Klein (1995) has in effect denied Mere Lemmas. To be completely fair to Klein, he has defended the conditional claim that if we are to hold on to plausible closure principles, then Mere Lemmas has to go (although I think that Klein is clear that he does want to hold on to those closure principles, and so the stronger claim is also true). This also strikes me as a non-starter. To deny Mere Lemmas is to attribute magic powers to mere lemmas; it is to accept that epistemic justification can be created ex nihilo; more importantly, it is just to get the cases wrong.

I anticipate that many philosophers friendly to the existence of immediate justification will want to deny the Entailment Principle. Indeed, Pryor (forthcoming) himself has taken this route. To me, the principle is undeniable. Pryor does two things. First, he points out the enormous class of cases for which the

principle makes trouble. On this, I agree wholeheartedly. Second, he argues against one particular way of supporting the principle. I have something to say about this.

Entailment can be supported by appeal to some probabilistic considerations. Suppose that you hold that E can justify P only if there is some probability function such that the conditional probability of P given E (in symbols, $\Pr(P | E)$) is higher than the unconditional probability of P ($\Pr(P)$). One may think this because one buys into a complete Bayesian package, according to which rational credences must be probabilities and must evolve according to the conditionalization rule.⁹ But one need not buy into the full Bayesian package to believe that there must be some probability function (not necessarily one which models the subject's credences) according to which $\Pr(P | E) > \Pr(P)$ (even if one doesn't think that rational update of credences operates only by conditionalization) if one is to be justified in believing P on the basis of E. Now, it is a theorem of the probability calculus that if P entails E then $\Pr(\text{not} - P | E) < \Pr(\text{not} - P)$ (provided that both P and E have non-extreme probabilities to begin with). Therefore, the Entailment principle follows from the probabilistic relevance constraint on justification. Attacking this probabilistic relevance, or perhaps some elements of its implementation, thus removes one important source of justification for the Entailment principle.

But one need not buy into a probabilistic account of justification to find the Entailment principle very plausible. Indeed, when I presented the Entailment principle I made a brief argument in its defense which didn't appeal to any probabilistic considerations. To repeat that argument in evidential terms, the idea is that if a certain proposition entails some evidence, then you cannot use that very evidence to reject the proposition. As far as that piece of evidence is concerned, everything is as it should be when the proposition is true. Therefore, misgivings about probabilistic accounts of justification are not enough to dismiss the Entailment principle, which enjoys independent support.¹⁰

One could also deny the Grounding principle, which I used to reinstate the problem even for neo-rationalist positions. As it stands, the Grounding principle is certainly false. For instance, it is perfectly possible for me to have propositional justification for believing that I have no higher-order beliefs (beliefs about beliefs), but it is hard to see how I could ever be doxastically justified (in the way required by the Grounding principle) in so believing. Perhaps we should also take into account the manner in which I ground my belief in whatever provides me with propositional justification—for instance, if I believe that Q on the basis of R and if R then Q but do it by applying the “rule” that from propositions of the form A and if B then C one can infer that C, then I don't have doxastic justification.¹¹ But the solutions to these problems, though perhaps not easy to

⁹The conditionalization rule has it that if E is all your evidence at a time t , then your confidence in any proposition P at t must be equal to the conditional probability of P on E.

¹⁰For further arguments for Entailment, see my reply to Pryor in this volume.

¹¹For relevant discussion, see Turri (2010).

state, shouldn't lead us to think that there is nothing to the Grounding principle. The Grounding principle is true, details aside. The details are important, of course, but not likely to interfere with the use to which we are putting the principle here.

Finally, we should take a careful look at Inductivism. Many philosophers would think it mad to give it up, for giving it up seems to invite skepticism and uphold the indefeasibility of justification. Although this is not the place to do it, I believe that a case can be made that abandoning Inductivism need not lead to either skepticism or indefeasibility. In a nutshell, we can avoid skepticism by holding that evidence that we usually do have does entail the propositions that we are justified in believing—for instance, we can hold that it is part of my evidence that I see that there is a hand in front of me. This position need not lead one to hold a “dijunctivist” view according to which our evidence differs from “good” to “bad” cases—roughly speaking, ordinary vs. skeptical scenarios—provided that one is comfortable with the possibility of false evidence—a possibility which I have argued for on independent grounds.¹² When it comes to defeasibility, we should be careful not to confuse it with non-entailment. To paraphrase Pryor (2000), defeasible justification is justification which can be lost given improvements in one's epistemic position.¹³ It is of course possible for one's epistemic position to improve and, as a result, for one to lose justification to believe something entailed by one's previous (and perhaps even present) evidence. Suppose, for instance, that you have a proof of some complicated theorem. You then show it to a very competent mathematician and (mistakenly) he assures you that there is a fallacy in the proof. You then cease to be justified in believing the theorem, even though you did have (and perhaps still have) evidence which entails it. Therefore, giving up Inductivism is irrelevant to holding on to the defeasibility of justification.

The believer in the kind of immediate justification that I have been examining here is committed to Inductivism. But giving up Inductivism need not mean giving up on immediate justification. To be sure, some ways of giving up Inductivism are indeed ways of giving up on immediate justification. For instance, to put it in terms of our example, if one thinks (as some neo-rationalists may do) that justification for believing H or not-E is always involved in one's justification for believing H on the basis of E, then one is thereby denying that E gives us immediate justification to believe H. But one may also think that my justification for believing that there is a hand in front of me is that there is a hand in front of me (although I only have this justification because I have an experience with

¹²See Comesaña and McGrath (forthcoming).

¹³See Pryor (2000), p. 517. In that paper, however, Pryor sometimes slips and talks as if there were no difference between defeasible justification and non-entailing justification. For instance, on the very next page he talks of “defeasible justification, justification that does not *guarantee* that our beliefs are correct” (Pryor's emphasis), and on the same page he talks of “defeasible, [i.e.] ampliative considerations.” Even more explicitly, footnote 11 on p. 543 includes the following: “The fallibilist's central thesis is precisely that it's possible to know things on the basis of defeasible evidence, evidence the possession of which is metaphysically compatible with your being wrong.”

that content). This would count as immediate justification according to Pryor's definition. The connection between Inductivism and immediate justification is therefore not straightforward.

Conclusion

Although, as just said, a commitment to immediate justification does not entail a commitment to Inductivism, many contemporary epistemologists are Inductivists *because* they hold that there is immediate justification which satisfies Inductivism. If, in addition, they also hold, as I have argued they should, that Closure (or better, particular applications of it), No Lemmas and Entailment are true, then they are in trouble. There are at least two ways out of the trouble. They might give up on the existence of immediate justification altogether. Neo-rationalism is sometimes seen as a solution of this kind to the problem. I have raised doubts, however, both about neo-rationalism as a solution to the problem as well as about its supposed abandonment of immediate justification. The other way out of the problem consists not in giving up immediate justification, but in giving up inductivist immediate justification. This is the kind of solution that I think merits more attention than philosophers have given it so far.¹⁴

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