

IMMEDIATE WARRANT, EPISTEMIC RESPONSIBILITY, AND MOOREAN DOGMATISM

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December, 2008

aleite@indiana.edu*For Jim Pryor, with gratitude, in order to find out exactly where we disagree.*

Abstract:

“Moorean Dogmatist” responses to external world skepticism endorse courses of reasoning that many people find objectionable. This paper seeks to locate this dissatisfaction in considerations about epistemic responsibility. I sketch a theory of immediate warrant and show how it can be combined with plausible “inferential internalist” demands arising from considerations of epistemic responsibility. The resulting view endorses immediate perceptual warrant but forbids the sort of reasoning that “Moorean Dogmatism” would allow. A surprising result is that Dogmatism’s commitment to immediate epistemic warrant isn’t enough to avoid certain standard arguments for skepticism about the external world.

According to the “Moorean Dogmatist” response to external world skepticism (notably, Pryor 2000), our sensory experience provides us with *prima facie* (defeasible) immediate justification, warrant, or reason to believe certain propositions about the world. This position has a great deal of intuitive appeal and can easily seem to be exemplified in our ordinary epistemic practice. At the same time, however, Moorean Dogmatists such as Pryor appear to endorse forms of reasoning or argumentation that many people – both epistemologists and non-philosophers – find unattractive. For instance, many Moorean Dogmatists appear to hold that so far as the relevant epistemic requirements are concerned, an ideal rational agent who considers the question of whether she is being deceived by an evil demon could (1) start from a position which presupposes no beliefs at all about the world, (2) consciously take her current experience as a basis for believing that she has hands and so believe that she has hands on that basis, (3) consciously reason from that belief to the conclusion that she is not a disembodied

spirit being deceived by an evil demon, and (4) thereby form the latter belief for the first time and in a fully epistemically satisfactory way. And this claim does not seem correct to many people: it seems that such a belief, formed in such a way under such circumstances, would not be fully epistemically satisfactory.

It is not easy to locate the source of this dissatisfaction, but according to one plausible suggestion, it has something to do with what we reasonably expect of mature rational agents in the course of conscious reasoning or epistemic deliberation. My goal in this paper is to defend a version of this suggestion. The rough idea that I will try to work out is this: even if sensory experiences provide or constitute the kind of reasons or warrants that the Dogmatist claims, one cannot acceptably reason from them to conclusions about the world unless one already has epistemically satisfactory beliefs to the effect that one is not, e.g., a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon. In working out this rough idea, I will take inspiration from a principle known as “the principle of inferential justification”:

In order to arrive at a justified belief that q on the basis of an inference from some premise p , one must have a justified belief to the effect that p supports q .

Elsewhere I have defended such principles from charges of vicious regress and other forms of unsatisfiability (Leite, 2008). I am inclined to think that some such principle is correct, at least so far as mature adults are concerned, and can be derived from, or explained in terms of, the demands appropriately placed upon mature rational agents in the course of epistemic deliberation.¹ In this paper, I will propose and defend a related principle that applies to any case in which a rational agent explicitly bases a belief upon

certain grounds in the course of conscious reasoning or epistemic deliberation. My first point will be that this principle is completely compatible with the “Dogmatist” insistence that sensory experience can provide immediate warrant, justification, or reason for beliefs about the world. As we will see however, this principle will enable an explanation of our distaste for the forms of reasoning apparently endorsed by “Dogmatist” views. A surprising result of this discussion will be that “Dogmatism” alone isn’t enough to avoid standard arguments for skepticism about the external world.

I. Immediate Warrant and the Demands of Epistemic Responsibility

Epistemic Warrant

I want to begin by slightly regimenting my vocabulary. Rather than talking indifferently about a person’s having warrant, justification, or reason to believe a certain proposition, I am going to talk in terms of *warrant*. What is a warrant? Roughly, and to a first approximation, a warrant to believe Q is a state or condition that *counts in favor* of believing Q. It is the sort of thing that could provide a correct answer to the question, “Why is Q an epistemically appropriate or acceptable proposition to believe (regardless of whether you actually believe it)?” I am going to assume not only that there are states or conditions that are warrants for belief, but also that we can sensibly ask about what it is in virtue of which these states or conditions are warrants. I don’t know whether, at the end of the day, I would want to accept this overall theoretical framework. But for my purposes here, I am simply going to work with a particular position within it.

My main reason for talking this way, rather than using the more colloquial term “reasons”, is theoretical inclusiveness: there are states or conditions that would, on some

views, count as warranting a belief even though it would not be natural to say that the person has reason, or a reason, to hold that belief. For instance, process reliabilist and proper functionalist views seem to be trying to characterize conditions under which a person has warrant to hold a certain belief. But the conditions they describe could be satisfied even though it doesn't seem entirely natural to describe the person as having reason, or having a reason, to hold the belief.

There is a second reason why I will talk in terms of "warrant". It is natural to think that reasons are connected to reasoning, in the following sense: whatever it is for a person to have a reason to believe *p*, or for there to be reason for that person to believe *p*, that reason will be something that the person could acceptably *utilize as a reason* in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning about whether *p* is true or about whether to believe that *p*. It may be, however, that *reasons* and *warrants* can come apart in this regard. That is, it may happen that on a particular occasion conditions obtain that make it epistemically acceptable for a person to believe that *p* even though the person could not acceptably use the consideration that those conditions obtain as a reason in the course of an explicit, conscious course of reasoning or deliberation about *p*. (In fact, I will be arguing that something like this is what happens in reasoning of the sort that Moorean Dogmatists would license.) To allow for this possibility, it can be helpful to distinguish warrants from reasons.

An adequate framework for thinking about warrant should allow us to draw two important distinctions.

The first is a distinction between *immediate* and *mediate* warrants. An *immediate warrant* is a state or condition whose status as a warrant is not constituted by one's

having warrant to believe any other propositions, in the following sense: an adequate account of *what makes it the warrant that it is for believing that proposition* would not need to say anything about one's having warrant to believe any other propositions. This requirement's satisfaction is compatible with its being the case that things appealed to in that account *are* warrants to believe other propositions. All that matters is that their being warrants to believe other propositions isn't part of the account of what makes this state or condition the warrant that it is for *this* proposition (Pryor, 2005). Epistemologists have debated whether any warrants are immediate in this sense. A number of candidates have been put forward as constituting immediate warrants, including experiential states and such things as pains and headaches. For the purposes of this discussion, I will grant that there are immediate warrants. My question is what exactly would follow if there were.

Even if sensory experiences or perceptual states do constitute immediate warrants to believe certain propositions, they do not constitute immediate warrants to believe every proposition whose truth they support. Some limitation is needed. A natural limitation, accepted by most theorists who accept immediate warrant at all, is to say that an experiential state cannot provide you with immediate warrant to believe anything other than what it "directly tells you" about the world, which is often interpreted in terms of the content of the experiential state itself (see, e.g., Pryor 2000). For the purposes of this discussion, I will simply grant this conception of experience as well as this limitation on immediate perceptual warrant. According to this approach, I will assume, your visual experience might well give you immediate warrant to believe that there is a hand in front of you. But your experience will not give you immediate warrant to believe that your

experience is reliable, that you are not a brain in a vat, or that you are not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon.

An adequate framework for thinking about warrant should enable us to draw a second important distinction as well. This is the distinction between *prima facie* warrant and *all-in* warrant. One can have warrant to believe one proposition and also have warrant to believe an incompatible proposition. What each, taken singly, warrants one in believing is what one has *prima facie* warrant to believe. What one has *all-in* warrant to believe is the result when these warrants are weighed against each other or the conflict is otherwise adjudicated. Many warrants are likewise *defeasible*: if certain conditions obtain, then the warrant provided by the state or condition will be defeated. (It is of course possible for the defeating conditions to be defeated in turn.) When defeating conditions obtain, it would still be appropriate to characterize the state or condition as a warrant, but it is only a *prima facie* warrant. Given that defeating conditions obtain, it does not provide *all-in* warrant.

A truly ecumenical characterization of the notion of warrant would remain neutral on what sorts of states or conditions can constitute warrants. One issue here would concern the relation of warranting states or conditions to the subject's awareness. For instance, some theories hold that only states or conditions of which the subject is aware can constitute warrants. Others would allow that states or conditions of which the subject is not aware can constitute warrants. Process reliabilist views would be a case in point. Maybe there could be a plausible theory that holds that states of which the subject is not even in a position to become aware could be warrants.

Another issue here would concern the “location” of the warranting states or conditions. Must they be internal to the subject, in some relevant sense of “internal”?

I will not be truly ecumenical on these issues. I am going to make two assumptions: First, that warranting states or conditions must be states or conditions that are the sorts of things that subjects can become aware of (though not necessarily through introspection alone); second, that warrants are not wholly “internal,” at least in the following regard – there can be real-world necessary conditions, entirely independent of the subject’s psychology or intrinsic physical states, for a state or condition’s being a warrant. (At present I see no reason not to accept that mind-independent states or conditions can themselves constitute warrants, but nothing here turns on this.)

I make one further crucial assumption about the kinds of things that warrants are. I assume that warrants are things of a type that is suited to play the role of epistemic reasons in an agent’s deliberations about what to believe. That is to say, if an agent has a warrant to believe Q and is deliberating about whether to believe Q, that warrant will be the sort of thing that could play the role marked out by the “because...” clause when one judges, “I should/may believe that Q, because...”. This is not to say that whenever one has a warrant to believe some proposition, one could use that warrant in this way; again, the claim is that warrants are things of a type that is suited to play this role, and this is compatible with other factors — say, considerations about how one may acceptably proceed in the course of reasoning — preventing particular instances from doing so on particular occasions.² This requirement, as I mean to understand it, does not entail that the warrant must itself be a proposition or have propositional content. The warranting state or condition is what is picked out by the “because...” clause, and what is so picked

out – not the proposition by which we pick it out – is the warrant. Or so I will assume for the purposes of this discussion.

Epistemic reasons are such because of their relation to truth: an epistemic reason in favor of a particular proposition supports, tells in favor of, or indicates the truth of that proposition. If warrants are the kinds of things that can play the role of epistemic reasons in an agent's deliberations about what to believe, then warrants support, tell in favor of, or indicate the truth of the propositions that they warrant believing. I will summarize this thought by saying that warrants must be "truth-conducive." There are a variety of ways of interpreting this requirement. Here, I will assume that it involves a demand for *reliability*: roughly, the world has to be such that relying upon the warranting state or condition will, all else equal, lead one to a true belief. This formulation may in fact be stronger than necessary, but it points in the right direction; in demanding reliability, I mean to be invoking our ordinary language term in its colloquial sense. I accordingly want to prescind from the details of particular theories of reliability (statistical, counterfactual, etc.) and highlight the underlying thought that such theories are attempting to develop.

Certain brands of "internalism" about warrant (including Pryor's, I think) will reject this interpretation of the requirement that warrant be truth-conducive. However, this interpretation is strongly suggested by our actual epistemic practice. Suppose that someone is brought up to predict the outcomes of battles by reading tea leaves, a method endorsed by everyone in his community. Neither he nor anyone in his community is in a position to understand the considerations that show that there is no reliable connection between the arrangement of leaves in tea cups and the outcomes of battles. If such a

person infers from considerations about tea leaves that a battle will turn out a certain way, we will certainly think that the person has behaved blamelessly; he has done everything that can reasonably be demanded of him in order to form a true belief. But at the same time, we will feel that there is a shortcoming here. We might say, “His training and circumstances are unfortunate. He really shouldn’t believe on the basis of considerations about tea leaves that the battle will turn out a certain way; no one should. Regardless of what he thinks, however blamelessly, considerations about the arrangement of tea leaves don’t actually provide any reason to believe anything at all about the outcomes of battles.” When we make judgments like this, what seems to be motivating us is the thought that there is not in fact the right sort of connection between arrangements of tea leaves and the outcomes of battles: the one is not a reliable indicator of the other, and as a result the belief about the outcome of battle is not warranted.

So understood, warrants will often be relative to contingent real-world conditions. This can most easily be seen in cases in which the warrant consists in the possession of evidence. In many cases, evidential support depends upon general facts about how the world works.³ For instance, we might grant that as the world in fact works, how matters look to you can be good evidence about how they are. But – to take up the sort of example that is the Moorean Dogmatist’s concern – if you were just a disembodied spirit in a non-material world being given deceptive visual experiences by an evil demon, then there would not be any sort of reliable link between things looking a certain way to you and their actually being that way. In that case, your visual experience wouldn’t in fact be evidence at all about how things are, regardless of what you quite reasonably believe about the matter. Since this evidential support relation thus depends upon your visual

system's functioning in a certain way in relation to the world, any warrants you have for beliefs about the world in virtue of possessing visual evidence would likewise do so: they would consequently depend upon the obtaining of certain facts about the world. And since a warrant is a state or condition whose obtaining can serve as a reason or evidence in favor of the warranted proposition, many warrants will be such as to depend upon contingent real-world conditions even if they do not consist in or require the possession of evidence or are in some other sense "unearned".

I will use the term "enabling condition" for a condition without which – as things are – a particular state or condition would not be the prima facie, defeasible warrant that it is because the right sort of link would not hold between the obtaining of the warranting state or condition and the truth of the warranted proposition. And I will use the term "disabling condition" for a condition which, if it obtained, would prevent the state or condition from so much as prima facie or defeasibly warranting belief in the proposition in question. Here are some examples. My recognition that I just took an ibuprofen defeasibly warrants me in believing that my headache will soon lift. But this would not be so if human physiology were such that ibuprofen didn't alleviate pain in anyone. Human physiology's being such that ibuprofen does not alleviate pain in anyone is thus a disabling condition for this warrant. Likewise, if visual experience provides prima facie or defeasible warrant for beliefs about the world, then one's being a disembodied spirit deceived by an evil demon will be a disabling condition relative to this warrant.

As I have characterized a disabling condition, it is not the same thing as a defeater. A defeater is a condition which is such as to defeat the prima facie or defeasible warrant provided by a particular warranting state or condition. It is not such as to prevent

that state or condition from being so much as a prima facie or defeasible warrant in the first place. For instance, many theorists hold that a subject's other mental states (beliefs, doubts, and the like) can constitute defeaters for the support the subject's experience provides for holding certain beliefs. Taken by itself, these theorists will say, the experience does support holding those beliefs, but all things considered – given the subject's other mental states – the subject is not warranted in holding those beliefs. A disabling condition, by contrast, would prevent the state or condition from even defeasibly supporting holding the belief in question.⁴

In sum, then, I will assume a conception of warrants as states or conditions that stand in an appropriately reliable connection to the truth. While we may also work with other notions of a belief's being "okay," "permissible," or "appropriate," this particular notion of warrant figures centrally in our epistemic practice. On this conception, warrants are not wholly "internal" in at least one familiar sense, though they are things of a sort suited to play the role of reasons in deliberation and reasoning. So understood, warrants will often be relative to how things in fact work in the world. A condition whose obtaining would prevent a particular state or condition from being so much as a prima facie, defeasible warrant for a particular belief is a *disabling* condition for that (putative) warrant. Relative to any immediate warrants provided by our sensory experience for beliefs about the world around us, the possibility that we are disembodied spirits being deceived by an evil demon is a case in point.

One last point about the notion of epistemic warrant. A person might have a warrant to believe a particular proposition, believe that proposition, and yet not hold that belief in a reasonable, epistemically appropriate, or epistemically satisfactory way. For

instance, the person might base the belief on some other, bad reason, or the person might not hold the belief on the basis of any epistemic reason at all, but instead out of wishful thinking. This is just one sort of example; a variety of things can go wrong in such a way that the person's actual belief is not fully epistemically satisfactory even though the person has a warrant for the believed proposition and so is warranted in believing it. To give a label to the status that is lacking in all such cases, I will say that a person is *doxastically justified* if the person not only has a warrant for the belief, but also holds the belief in a way that is fully epistemically satisfactory (beyond epistemic criticism in all respects other than truth).⁵ A variety of conditions will have to be met in order for a person to be *doxastically justified* regarding a particular belief on a particular occasion, and I will not attempt to offer an account of them here. In what follows, I will use the term "doxastically justified" simply as a label for a person's status in relation to a belief which satisfies all requirements needed in order to be beyond epistemic criticism (aside from truth). The point that I want to emphasize here is that we have to distinguish whatever further conditions must be met in order for a person to be *doxastically justified* from the conditions that must be met in order for the person to have warrant. It would be a mistake to think that the factors involved in these further conditions must be factors that constitute the person's having warrant to hold the belief.

Some "Responsibilist" Proposals

I turn now to requirements on epistemically satisfactory belief that might be thought to arise from considerations about epistemic responsibility.

A person can have a warrant for a particular belief and yet not recognize the warranting condition or state as such. Very young children are generally in this situation, and mature adults can be in it as well. Mature adults differ from very young children in an important respect, however: they are often in a position to recognize a particular state or condition as telling in favor of the truth of a particular belief. Mature adults – and especially those who have been trained to think critically – also differ from children in another important respect: they are capable of forming and modifying their beliefs in response to their evaluations of reasons in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation.

Different abilities warrant different demands (Wright, 2001). The above differences consequently open up the possibility of modes of epistemic evaluation that are not applicable to children and that go beyond the simple question of whether a person has warrant to hold a particular belief. In particular, they open up the possibility of asking whether a particular person proceeded *responsibly* in the deliberative formation of a particular belief and whether a particular belief – regardless of whether or not formed through explicit deliberation – is held in an *epistemically responsible way*. For if someone is capable of directly forming or modifying a mental state or attitude through deliberation, then it is something for which she is properly held responsible and about which it can be asked whether she has conducted – and is conducting – herself well or poorly. These matters are properly regarded as *epistemic*, insofar as deliberation is aimed at forming, or correcting, beliefs in a way that accords with the truth.

Questions about whether a particular belief is responsibly held can involve a variety of issues. But one central issue for such evaluations is how matters look *from the perspective of the person whose belief it is*, and in particular how matters look to the

person regarding reasons for and against the belief. It is arguable – though disputed – that a mature adult cannot hold a belief responsibly unless she treats (or is prepared to treat) something as a good reason for it. Such a requirement would clearly be too strong if it demanded that the person have explicitly highlighted something as a good reason for holding the belief; only certain dispositions of thought and response can reasonably be demanded (such as a disposition to reason from the relevant consideration, for example, or to offer it as a reason when asked). Even so, it might be thought that such a requirement is too strong. But something weaker is hard to deny:

When in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning one bases a belief that *p* upon a particular warranting state or condition *W*, that belief will not be formed or held responsibly unless one takes *W* to support (defeasibly tell in favor of) the truth of *p*.

As before, it is surely too strong to require that the person have an explicit, conscious belief that *W* supports the truth of *p*. At most what is required is an “implicit” or “dispositional” belief (like your current belief that the sun is more than 42,798 miles from the earth), as manifested in dispositions of thought and response such as a willingness to treat the claim in question as a premise for reasoning, to assent to it if asked, etc.

Here is an argument for this requirement. To explicitly base a belief upon a particular state or condition is to link one’s attitude to that state or condition in such a way that the acceptability of one’s belief state stands or falls with the adequacy of that basis. It is in effect to say, “It is upon *this* that I stake my claim.” Understanding the basing relation in this way, it is hard to see how someone could responsibly base a belief upon a particular state or condition in the course of conscious deliberation or reasoning

without taking that state or condition to tell in favor of the truth of the believed proposition. For one thing, to base the belief upon that state or condition is to take that state or condition as an epistemic reason, and that requires, as any mature believer recognizes, that the state or condition tell in favor of the truth of the proposition. For another thing, to base a belief upon a particular state or condition is precisely to treat it as something other than a hunch or guess, but rather as something *supported*. And it is irresponsible to treat a belief in this way without taking something to tell in favor of the truth of the proposition in question. The basic idea I want to endorse here is consequently this: if someone consciously and explicitly moves in thought from a particular warrant to a particular belief, that belief will be little more than a guess from that person's point of view unless the person takes the warrant to tell in favor of the truth of the believed proposition. And if the belief is little more than a guess from that person's point of view, then it is not responsibly held. We quite appropriately expect more of mature believers.

The requirement that I have been discussing engenders further requirements. Consider some possible *disabling condition* Π whose obtaining would prevent the state or condition W from defeasibly telling in favor of the truth of P. Suppose that you base your belief that P upon W. As I've just argued, this requires you to believe that W tells (at least defeasibly) in favor of the truth of P. And suppose that you recognize that Π 's obtaining would prevent W from even defeasibly telling in favor of the truth of P. Then, you are rationally required to believe also that Π does not obtain, at least if you consider the question. For given that you recognize the incompatibility between Π 's obtaining and W's defeasibly telling in favor of the truth of P, requirements of consistency preclude you from endorsing both the claim that Π obtains and that W tells in favor of the truth of

P, and they also preclude you from endorsing the claim that W tells in favor of the truth of P while suspending judgment or forming no opinion at all about whether \square obtains. So if you consider the question at all, you are rationally committed to endorsing the claim that \square does not obtain. If you failed to do so under such circumstances, your belief that P would be rendered irresponsible: either from your own point of view it would be little more than a guess, or it would be held in a way that involves you in a manifest inconsistency. Consequently, the following additional requirement appears quite plausible:

When in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning one bases a particular belief upon a particular warranting state or condition, that belief will not be formed or held responsibly unless for each possible condition that one considers and regards as a disabling condition for the warrant in question, one believes that it does not obtain.

To put the thought another way (where brackets indicate the relevant scope):

If one is a mature rational agent, then epistemic responsibility demands that one must [if one (a) explicitly and consciously bases a particular belief upon a particular warranting state or condition in the course of deliberation or reasoning and (b) considers a particular possible condition that one regards as a disabling condition for the warrant in question, then one believes that that condition does not obtain].

As this formulation brings out, the requirement imposes a structural requirement, based in considerations about responsibility, that one hold certain sorts of beliefs, given that one holds others in certain ways. As before, the requisite beliefs may be implicit, consisting

in dispositional states including such things as a willingness to treat the claim in question as a premise for reasoning, to assent to it if asked, to dismiss the relevant possibility as soon as one considers it, etc.⁶

This requirement is supported by simple examples from our ordinary practice. Here's one. Suppose that you consciously and explicitly base a belief that your headache will soon lift upon the consideration that you just took an ibuprofen. You recognize that if ibuprofen did not at all interact with human physiology in such a way as to remove pain, then the fact that you just took an ibuprofen would not tell in favor of the belief that your headache will soon lift. Suppose you are now asked: "What of the possibility that human physiology is such that ibuprofen does not remove pain?" If you say, "Oh, I don't have any opinion at all about whether that's so or not, but still: my headache will soon lift because I just took an ibuprofen," then – assuming there's no funny business going on – your position is open to criticism. You are criticizable for holding your belief about your headache in the way that you do.

The requirement I've been discussing is quite narrow, since it is limited only to possible disabling conditions that one *explicitly considers*. I grant that it is plausible that the range of possible disabling conditions relevant to attributions of epistemic responsibility is not limited in this way. For it is arguable that in at least some cases, if one fails to believe that a possibility does not obtain which one recognizes would prevent W from telling favor of P, then one's epistemic position is open to criticism if one goes ahead and explicitly and consciously bases one's belief that P on W — even if one fails to explicitly consider that possibility at the time. At the very least, one has failed to put two and two together, and that can be as much a failure of epistemic responsibility as any

other. Nonetheless, my argument here will not depend upon extending the requirement in this way, since the weaker, more limited requirement is sufficient for my purposes.⁷

It is worth noting that the requirement is quite narrow in another way as well: it applies only to possible disabling conditions. It is a vexed matter whether in basing a belief upon defeasible evidence, one is thereby committed to the non-obtaining of all possible defeating conditions for that evidence or even – more weakly – to the non-obtaining of every possible defeating condition for that evidence that one considers. Regardless of whether some such requirement is correct, it should be emphasized that the requirement I've defended here is of a different sort. It concerns certain possibilities that one takes to be incompatible with there being the defeasible evidential warrant in the first place.⁸

The responsibility requirement I've been defending demands only that one *have* certain beliefs in order to responsibly hold certain other beliefs. However, it seems clear that if these beliefs are not themselves responsibly held, then the target beliefs will not be responsibly held either. For instance, suppose that I explicitly base a belief that it is 2:15 PM upon the fact that my watch says so. I recognize that if my watch isn't reliable, then the fact that it reads "2:15" wouldn't defeasibly support the conclusion that it is 2:15. Fortunately, I believe that my watch is reliable. Suppose, however, that this latter belief flies in the face of lots and lots of evidence in my possession. Then my belief that my watch is reliable is clearly open to epistemic criticism: I didn't proceed as I should have in relation to it. The same point will apply, all else equal, to my belief about the time, and it will apply because of my failing in relation to my belief about my watch's reliability.

In fact, an even stronger requirement is quite plausible. Suppose that I have no actual warrant for my belief that my watch is reliable. In that case, even if that belief is responsibly held, it will not be fully epistemically satisfactory. In the terminology I used previously, it will not be *doxastically justified*. But under these conditions, my belief that the time is 2:15, based as it is upon what my watch says, will also be open to epistemic criticism; it too will not be fully epistemically satisfactory. For instance, we might say, “Since you have no good reason to believe that your watch is reliable, you shouldn’t believe that the time is 2:15 merely on the basis of what your watch says.” I am consequently inclined to accept the following requirement:

When in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning one bases a particular belief upon a particular warranting state or condition, that belief will not be *doxastically justified* unless for each possible condition that one regards as a disabling condition for that warrant and considers at all, one believes that it does not obtain *and* this latter belief is *doxastically justified as well*.

My argument in the remainder of this paper will be based upon the assumption that this requirement is correct. As before, the additional belief may be only implicit or “dispositional.” It may be manifested in nothing more than certain dispositions of thought and response.

I want to stress that since I have not offered a full characterization of conditions that must be met – or that suffice – for a person to be doxastically justified in relation to a particular belief, this requirement remains something more like a requirement-schema. At a minimum, it requires that the belief in question be warranted, and consequently that

there be an appropriate connection with truth, and also that any relevant requirements of epistemic responsibility be met. But for all this requirement says, the belief in question could be fully epistemically satisfactory even if the person does not recognize anything as a reason for holding it. It might even enjoy a kind of *default* status, so long as there is an appropriate connection with truth in the ground of that status. All that I really want to insist upon for my purposes here is that in the specified conditions, the person must have the relevant belief, the person must hold it responsibly (whatever that requires), and it must be warranted.⁹

Another important aspect of this requirement deserves comment as well. This requirement is *not* an epistemic priority requirement, insofar as it makes no claim about the nature or structure of the warrant that one must have for the requisite belief. In particular, the requirement does not demand that one have an antecedent or independent warrant. The requirement simply states that if one has a certain sort of doxastically justified belief – explicitly based on certain grounds under certain sorts of conditions – then one also has to have certain other doxastically justified beliefs. It is a further question how the warrants for the latter beliefs might acceptably be related to the warrants for the former.

It is a commonplace in the epistemological literature to assume that “responsibilist” ideas of the sort sketched here force one to accept *higher-order requirements*, that is, requirements demanding (justified) beliefs about one’s beliefs and their justificatory status. Regardless of whether that is correct, it should be emphasized that the requirements I have sketched here are not higher-order. Rather, they require that

one have epistemically acceptable *first-order* beliefs that certain things are or are not the case and that certain states or conditions indicate the truth of certain propositions.

Immediate Warrant and Immediate Doxastic Justification

It is perfectly possible to combine “responsibilist” requirements of this sort with a commitment to the existence of immediate warrants. In many ways, the result would be an attractive view. It would allow one to accept the reliabilist idea that epistemically satisfactory beliefs must be appropriately related to truth even if they aren’t in fact true. It would allow one to accept the “internalist” idea that for mature adults, at least, epistemic evaluation involves notions of epistemic responsibility and concerns, at least in part, how matters look from the agent’s point of view. And it would allow one to accommodate the idea that there are some warrants, notably perceptual warrants, whose warranting power is not constituted, even in part, by one’s having any warrant to believe anything else. Moreover, the resulting view would show a way to connect our interest in epistemic warrant with our interest in how things look from the first-person standpoint of an epistemic deliberator. And it would thus provide a way to understand how our interest in the first-person deliberative stance is connected with our interest in the acquisition of true beliefs. (Of course, the particular label, “doxastic justification,” is irrelevant here. The proposal is not intended as an “analysis” of some pre-theoretical concept or term in everyday usage. What would matter is that the package captures a bundle of epistemic desiderata that are of significance to us.)

The result is a view which holds that while there are immediate warrants – notably perceptual warrants – no belief deliberately based on such a warrant will be

doxastically justified unless one also has certain other doxastically justified beliefs. And this will be a *constitutive requirement*, insofar as one's having those other doxastically justified beliefs is part of what makes it the case that the target belief is doxastically justified. According to such a view, then, it would be a serious mistake to confuse the notions of *immediate warrant* and *immediate doxastic justification*. An *immediately doxastically justified belief* is a belief whose status as doxastically justified does not constitutively depend upon one's having any other doxastically justified beliefs. For all I have said here, there may be immediately doxastically justified beliefs, though it is possible – and I think arguable – that the considerations that motivate “responsibilist” requirements of the sort highlighted above will also motivate the denial of immediate doxastic justification. However this may be, though, on the compound view sketched here some beliefs will be ones for which one has an immediate warrant, and which are based on an immediate warrant, but whose status as doxastically justified constitutively depends upon one's possession of some other doxastically justified beliefs. These beliefs will accordingly be based on immediate warrants but will *not* be immediately justified. Immediate warrant and immediate doxastic justification are thus not merely notionally separable for a view along these lines; they are extensionally inequivalent.

II. “Moorean Dogmatism”

“Moorean Reasoning” and Immediate Warrant

Contemporary “Moorean Dogmatists” hold that there are *immediate perceptual warrants* for beliefs about the world outside of our own minds. So, for instance, some

“Moorean Dogmatists” hold that the visual experience as of a hand gives one immediate prima facie warrant to believe that there is a hand. My question here is what exactly would follow from such a thesis when it is placed within the broader framework articulated in the previous section. My answer will be this: less follows than is commonly thought.

“Moorean Dogmatism” is generally aimed at providing a response to external world skepticism. The idea is this. The form of skepticism at issue holds that no one is doxastically justified in believing anything about the world around them by means of the senses. The Moorean Dogmatist diagnoses this skeptical claim as arising from commitment to a particular principle about *experiential warrant*:

In order to have an experiential warrant to believe anything about the world around one, one must have an independent warrant for believing such things as that one is not dreaming, not a brain in a vat, and not a disembodied spirit being given misleading hallucinatory experiences by an evil demon.¹⁰

If this principle is correct, then we have no immediate experiential warrants for beliefs about the world outside of our own minds, since this principle holds that our possession of experiential warrants constitutively depends upon our having warrant to believe some other things. But of course this is precisely what the “Moorean Dogmatist” denies. The “Moorean Dogmatist” consequently attempts to avoid skepticism by rejecting this principle.

Despite rejecting this principle, the Moorean Dogmatist wants to allow that we can have warrant to believe such things as that we are not brains in vats and not

disembodied spirits deceived by an evil demon. The Moorean Dogmatist's suggestion is that we have *mediate* warrant to believe such things, warrant that stems from our *immediate* warrant to believe such things as that we have hands. The Moorean Dogmatist consequently represents the order of our warrants like this:

Visual experience of hands



I have a hand



I am not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon.

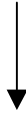
Notice that the claim so far is *not* a claim about what a person's beliefs are based upon or may acceptably be based upon, nor is it a claim that a certain inference or course of reasoning would be reasonable or epistemically acceptable. The claim is simply one about the relations amongst the warrants a person can have to believe particular propositions.

Standardly, however, Moorean Dogmatists go further and claim that this pattern of relations amongst warrants maps onto a fully reasonable pattern of argument or reasoning by which one could arrive at a doxastically justified belief that one is not a bodiless spirit under an evil demon's sway. Pryor, for instance, considers a course of reasoning which we can represent thus:

Moore-1. [Visual experience of hands]



Moore-2. I have a hand.



Moore-3. I am not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon.

He urges that if one accepts that there is immediate perceptual warrant, then this reasoning “can be a way to acquire some warrant to believe Moore-3; and it can be reasonable to believe Moore-3 on the basis of it” (forthcoming, 7). He consequently has spent much effort attempting to explain away the seeming unattractiveness of reasoning such as Moore 1-3 (Pryor, 2004).

Acceptance of such reasoning is readily intelligible, given the Moorean Dogmatist’s aspirations in relation to external world skepticism. The Moorean Dogmatist accepts a certain framework conception that has structured much epistemological theorizing in the Twentieth Century. According to this conception, if we are doxastically justified in believing anything about the world around us, then we should be able to reconstruct how an (ideal) epistemic subject could – without assuming any claims about the external world at the outset – acceptably reason or deliberate her way to warranted conclusions about the world, thereby acquiring doxastically justified beliefs. The Moorean Dogmatist’s aspiration, then, is to explain how this could be possible, not just for beliefs such as that we have hands, but also for beliefs such as that we are not bodiless spirits being deceived by an evil demon (under the assumption that the latter beliefs are not warranted by, and cannot be acceptably reached from, purely what is given to us through a priori reflection.) It is worth noting that a second framework idea appears to be moving the Moorean Dogmatist here as well. This is that there should at least be some cases in which it will be fully epistemically acceptable for one explicitly to reason in a

way that tracks the structure of the warrants one has for a given belief, thereby arriving at that belief for the first time in a way that renders it fully epistemically acceptable.

It is important to be completely clear about the Moorean Dogmatist's thesis at this juncture. A careful Moorean Dogmatist will hold that if one has *doubts* (whether warranted or unwarranted), or has reason to have doubts, to that effect that one is being deceived by an evil demon, or if one *suspects* that one is so deceived, then such reasoning cannot yield a doxastically justified belief in the conclusion of the reasoning. Likewise if one believes (with or without warrant) that one is not warranted in believing that one has hands on the basis of one's visual experience. But, as Pryor puts it,

In the happy case where you neither *have nor have reason to have* the kinds of doubts the skeptic wants to induce, then the [warrant] your experiences give you for Moore's premise [2] will be undefeated and [rationally] unobstructed. Having that [warrant] for the premise *will* make Moore's conclusion more credible for you; and that justificatory relationship is one that you can rationally endorse in your reasoning (2004, 369).

The careful Dogmatist's thesis is thus this: if one considers the question of whether one is a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon, starts out with no attitude at all – not doubt, tendency to believe, balanced credence, or suspension of judgment – about the issue, and starts with no background commitments about the world at all and no higher-order beliefs to the effect that one possesses defeaters for or is not warranted in believing any of the relevant beliefs, *then* it is possible in principle for one first to form a fully epistemically satisfactory belief about the external world on the basis of an immediate

perceptual warrant, from there to infer that one is not being deceived by an evil demon, and thus to arrive for the first time at a fully epistemically acceptable belief that one is not being so deceived.¹¹

This thesis is not established merely by the thesis that one can have immediate perceptual warrant for some beliefs about the world: the existence of immediate perceptual warrant does not entail or guarantee the epistemic satisfactoriness of the Moorean reasoning. To see this, consider how the responsibilist view sketched above would regard the Moorean reasoning. This view allows that a visual experience as of your hands provides you an immediate warrant for the belief that you have hands. However, this view also endorses the following principle:

When in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning one bases a particular belief upon a particular warranting state or condition, that belief will not be doxastically justified unless for each possible condition that one regards as a disabling condition for that warrant and considers at all, one believes that it does not obtain *and* this latter belief is doxastically justified as well.

Of course, your being a disembodied spirit undergoing misleading visual experiences caused by an evil demon would be a disabling condition for your experience's providing warrant for you to believe pretty much anything about the world at all. So if you recognize that this is so, then – given this principle – you cannot attain a doxastically justified belief in the truth of a proposition about the world around you by deliberately basing it upon your experience unless you have a doxastically justified belief that you are not such a disembodied spirit. Suppose, then, that you consciously recognize that your

being a disembodied spirit under an evil demon's sway would prevent your visual experience from telling in favor of the truth of the proposition that you have hands. You are in the position specified by the Dogmatist's thesis. You are deliberating about whether to believe, on the basis of your visual experience, that you have hands. Suppose that you do go ahead and form this belief on this basis. According to the responsibilist view defended here, the belief will not be responsibly held, since you do not yet believe that you are not a disembodied spirit under an evil demon's sway. (That latter belief is supposed to be arrived at only in the next stage in the reasoning.) Since the belief that you have hands would not be responsibly held under such circumstances, it also wouldn't be doxastically justified. And if you go on to infer from it that you are not a disembodied spirit under an evil demon's sway, that latter belief will not be doxastically justified either. One cannot arrive at a doxastically justified belief by explicitly basing the belief upon another belief that is not doxastically justified. The resultant belief would be open to epistemic criticism.

So the responsibilist view defended here could allow immediate experiential warrants, but it would hold that the Moorean reasoning, if literally followed out in a course of explicit, conscious reasoning, cannot enable one to arrive for the first time at a doxastically justified belief that one is not under an evil demon's sway. In order to yield a doxastically justified belief to this effect, one would already have to have a doxastically justified belief to this effect. Again, to focus attention on the key issue: if one literally followed out the Moorean reasoning under the imagined circumstances, there would be a moment, just before one formed the belief that one has hands, at which one's deliberative position would be fully represented like this, "I recognize that if I were being deceived by

an evil demon, that would prevent my visual experience from telling in favor of the truth of the claim that I have hands, and as of yet I have no opinion whatsoever as to whether I am being deceived by an evil demon, but still, I conclude from my visual experience that I have hands.” According to the view in question, that position is epistemically criticizable – it is epistemically irresponsible – and this is so even if one’s visual experience gives one an immediate warrant to believe that one has hands.¹²

So if this view is correct, there is a perennial epistemological aspiration that Dogmatism tries – but fails – to fulfill. This is the aspiration of explaining how an ideal epistemic agent who considers the possibility that she is being deceived by an evil demon could fully explicitly reason her way from a position that takes for granted no claims about the world to fully epistemically satisfactory beliefs about the world (including the belief that she is not being deceived by an evil demon). Requirements at play in our ordinary notion of epistemic responsibility preclude the Dogmatist from accomplishing this in the way that he hopes.

I want to stress that this is *not* an argument against the Dogmatist thesis that there are immediate perceptual warrants. It isn’t even an argument against the proposal that a course of cognitive processing that responds to these perceptual warrants could enable one to acquire an epistemically satisfactory belief that one isn’t an evil demon’s victim. Rather, it is an argument about what is acceptable in the course of fully explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning engaged in by a mature rational agent who already recognizes certain things: it is an argument that even if there are immediate perceptual warrants, one cannot utilize them in fully explicit deliberation or reasoning to arrive for the first time at doxastically justified beliefs to the effect that recognized disabling

conditions for those warrants do not obtain. I should emphasize too that the claim that there are immediate warrants isn't playing any role here other than as a concession. One could reject the Moorean reasoning on the basis of responsibilist considerations even if one denied that there are any immediate warrants. (In that case, one would think the Moorean Dogmatist makes *two* mistakes.)¹³

Not all Moorean Dogmatists accept the reliability constraint on warrant that I appealed to in articulating and defending the responsibilist criticism of the Moorean reasoning. For this reason, they could reject the criticism offered in this section by rejecting part of its motivation. However, I did not mean to be offering an internal criticism that any Dogmatist would have to accept. Rather, I meant to be articulating what I take to underlie our (pretheoretical) dissatisfaction with the kind of reasoning that Moorean Dogmatists endorse. As I see it, then, the ultimate question is this: which total package provides the best fit with our ordinary epistemic judgments and practice? I've urged that the reliability constraint on warrant fits well, and the total package I've offered is strengthened by the fact that this constraint can help explain responsibilist requirements that enable a plausible account of our pretheoretical resistance to the Dogmatist's reasoning.

At the same time, however, I want to stress that the evaluative judgments that fuel this resistance are compelling independently of this particular theoretical package. In ordinary life we would all agree that a mature adult is open to criticism if she explicitly and consciously reasons from the fact that she has taken an ibuprofen to the conclusion that her headache will soon lift while also avowing that she has no opinion whatsoever as to whether human physiology is such that ibuprofen never relieves pain in human

beings.¹⁴ As long as we agree that relative to the respective courses of reasoning the possibility that one is being deceived by an evil demon is relevantly analogous to the possibility that human physiology is such that ibuprofen never removes pain, the objection to Dogmatism will go through regardless of the theoretical machinery that we bring in to explain the relevant similarity. And it is hard to deny that the two are relevantly similar.¹⁵

The Upshot for “Moorean Dogmatism”

I have argued that it is both possible and desirable to combine commitment to the existence of immediate perceptual warrants with certain requirements pertaining to epistemic responsibility. The consequence is a view which denies the following skeptical principle:

In order to have an experiential warrant to believe anything about the world around one, one must have an independent warrant for believing that one is not a disembodied spirit being given misleading hallucinatory experiences by an evil demon.

But the resulting view also holds that it is not possible to utilize the Moorean reasoning to arrive for the first time at a doxastically justified belief in that reasoning’s conclusion. This does not mean that this view would be forced to say that we cannot be doxastically justified in believing that we are not victims of an evil demons deceptions; only that if we are, it will not be by virtue of explicitly arriving at this belief via this sort of reasoning.

Still, the resultant view would be vulnerable to a familiar form of skeptical argument. Here’s how. Suppose we grant that there are immediate experiential warrants.

It might still be said that considerations of epistemic responsibility dictate that a mature rational agent cannot acceptably believe anything at all about the world on the basis of sensory experience unless she has an *independently supported* belief that she is not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon. This is to demand a warrant for this belief that does not constitutively depend – whether immediately or mediately – upon experiential warrants to believe things about the world (though not to demand it as a condition for having any experiential warrants at all). So consider the following principle:

In order to be doxastically justified in believing anything about the world on the basis of sensory experience, one must believe that one is not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon, and this belief must be doxastically justified in a way that does not constitutively depend upon experiential warrants or upon one's having any doxastically justified perceptual beliefs; it must be *independently* doxastically justified.

If one cannot – within the constraints of this requirement – have a doxastically justified belief that one is not being deceived by an evil demon, then acceptance of this requirement commits one to external world skepticism. The view of doxastic justification sketched in this paper does not force acceptance of this principle, but it is compatible with it. And this points out a very important lesson: the “Dogmatist” view that there are immediate perceptual warrants does not defeat a very familiar form of skeptical argument. More is needed.

Two broad options present themselves. The first is to accept this principle, but to supplement the account of immediate perceptual warrant with an explanation of how we

are non-experientially warranted in believing that we are not disembodied spirits being deceived by an evil demon. The history of our subject suggests pessimism about such a response (though the idea of unearned default warrants may be of some help).

The second option is to reject this principle. Here again two broad options present themselves.

The first is to combine the claim that there are immediate perceptual warrants with the claim that there can be *immediate experiential doxastic justification*, that is, cases in which a belief is doxastically justified by experience in a way that does not constitutively depend upon one's having any other doxastically justified beliefs. This claim can be reconciled with the requirements on epistemic responsibility utilized in this paper.¹⁶ However, I'm inclined to think that for mature believers at least, the demands of epistemic responsibility militate against the possibility of immediate doxastic justification, roughly because they require that in every case, one must epistemically acceptably take or treat (or be prepared to take or treat) something as telling in favor of the truth of the belief – which demands, in turn, that one have further doxastically justified beliefs.¹⁷

For this reason, I think that it is important – especially for those of us who are drawn to requirements stemming from epistemic responsibility – to notice a second option: there are ways of denying this skeptical requirement without claiming that there can be immediate doxastic justification, even if one grants that there is immediate *prima facie* experiential warrant for (some) beliefs about the world. The key is to see that there would be no incoherence in a view which *grants*:

1. In order to be doxastically justified in believing anything on the basis of sensory experience, one must have a doxastically justified belief that one is not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon, but which *denies*:
2. This latter belief must be doxastically justified in a way that does not constitutively depend upon one's having other doxastically justified beliefs about the world.

A view along some such lines would evade the skeptical conclusion by denying that in order to have doxastically justified beliefs about the world, one must have an *independent* warrant for believing that one is not an evil demon's victim. However, even if a view in this direction is coherent, it can be hard to see its possibility. To do that, we have to give up the assumption that if we have any doxastically justified beliefs about the world at all, then we should be able to reconstruct how an ideally reflective subject could – without assuming any claims about the external world at the outset – explicitly reason or deliberate her way to conclusions about the world, making only acceptable moves at each step and thereby acquiring doxastically justified beliefs about the world. And to give up that assumption is of course to give up one of the traditional demands of epistemology.¹⁸

Appendix: Responsibilist Requirements and “Transmission Failure”

According to a prominent line of criticism, arguments such as Moore 1-3 suffer from a failure of *warrant transmission* and that is why one cannot reasonably base a

belief in Moore-3 on this inference (see, for instance, Wright 2002, 2003, 2004, and forthcoming). To say that this argument suffers from a failure of warrant to transmit is to say that even if one had warrant to believe Moore-2 (based on Moore-1), that warrant does not transmit across the entailment to Moore-3 in such a way as to provide one with a warrant to believe Moore-3. The rough idea behind this charge has two parts: first, that it is constitutive of the kind of warrant one has for Moore-2 that one couldn't so much as have warrant for Moore-2 unless one had some warrant – other than any warrant provided by Moore-2 – to believe Moore-3; second, that because of this constraint, one's warrant to believe Moore-2 will not transmit across the inference from Moore-2 (based on Moore-1) to Moore-3.¹⁹

Taking this charge completely literally, and assuming the account of warrant presented here, the “responsibilist” objection presented above to Moore 1-3 is not a charge of transmission failure for warrant. For one thing, the first part of the charge of transmission failure would not be endorsed by this objection. The objection allows that visual experiences can provide *immediate warrants* for beliefs about the world, so it would not grant that one could not (as a constitutive matter) have the kind of warrant for Moore-2 that one has unless one also has some other warrant for Moore-3. Rather, the objection charges that one could not arrive through explicit deliberation at a doxastically justified belief in Moore-2 unless one had a doxastically justified belief in Moore-3.

A second point is relevant here. Talk of “warrant transmission” across inferences or through courses of reasoning is itself rather odd, given the account of warrant presented here. A Dogmatist might want to say that the Moorean reasoning “can be a way to acquire some warrant to believe Moore-3” (Pryor forthcoming, 7). But this

doesn't seem to be quite right, strictly speaking. Even if one does not go through the reasoning, one has a warrant to believe Moore-3 in virtue of undergoing certain visual experiences. It is a *mediate* warrant – a warrant which one has only in virtue of having warrant to believe certain supporting propositions – but it is a warrant all the same. Does this mean that reasoning in accordance with Moore 1-3 could be a way to acquire a warranted belief in Moore-3? Yes, it does. If you acquire a belief in Moore-3 in this way, then you will thereby acquire a warranted belief – that is, a belief for which you have warrant. But this does not mean that your belief will be epistemically satisfactory. After all, since you do have warrant to believe Moore-3 (a mediate warrant), *any* way in which you acquire a belief in Moore-3 will yield a warranted belief, in the sense of a belief for which you have warrant. The warrant thus doesn't “fail to transmit” in the Moorean reasoning because it isn't right to describe the warrant as something that could, or could not, *transmit*. Whether or not you go through the course of reasoning is irrelevant to the question of whether you have that warrant to believe Moore-3. (It might be suggested that we should read the claim about the acquisition of warrant as suggesting that the state or condition of *having gone through the course of reasoning* is itself the relevant warrant to believe Moore-3. But this would be a very different account of how one is supposed to wind up with an epistemically acceptable belief in Moore-3.)

The point here is a simple one: on the account of warrant presented here, warrants aren't things that get transmitted through acts of inference or courses of reasoning. They can perhaps be generated by going through processes of inference or courses of reasoning. But that is not a matter of a warrant transmitting from the premise to the conclusion.

It may be that talk of “warrant transmission” is simply a fanciful way of expressing the conjunction of two claims: a *closure* claim for the relevant warrants and an “in virtue of” claim identifying which warrant is antecedent of the other. If that is what is meant, then we can understand talk of transmission-failure in two ways, as claiming a failure of closure under entailment, or as granting closure but denying the relevant “in virtue of” claim.

Both charges have some plausibility regarding the warrants under discussion here. Take closure first. My visual experiences of my hands might be claimed not to provide any warrant at all – not even a mediate one – for the belief that two plus two equals four, even though on many views “I have hands” entails “two plus two equals four.” Perhaps a similar claim could be made about the warrant-situation regarding my visual experiences of my hands and my belief that I am not being deceived by an evil demon. (Certain ways of understanding the reliability requirement in the proposed account of warrant may also guarantee failures of warrant to be closed under entailment.)

Second, one could grant the relevant instance of closure but deny that it is *in virtue of* being perceptually warranted in believing that one has hands that one is warranted in believing that one is not being deceived by an evil demon. So far as I can see, the only way to make this charge stick is to claim that one could not have an experiential warrant to believe that one has hands unless one had some other warrant to believe that one is not being deceived by an evil demon. If that were so, then closure would hold – whenever one has experiential warrant to believe one has hands, one will have warrant to believe that one is not being deceived – but it would not be in virtue of having experiential warrant to believe that one has hands that one will have that warrant

to believe that one is not being deceived. Perhaps further complications could be added, such as proposing that two distinct sources of warrant for the latter belief will be in play in this sort of case, and one might then worry about how they are related. Perhaps one might find some additional phenomenon in all that detail that one would want to call “transmission failure.” But however those further developments go, it should be noted that any such charge arising in this way would depend upon the idea that the experiential warrant for one’s belief that one has hands is not immediate after all, but instead constitutively depends upon one’s having warrant to believe some other proposition. Whether any of these charges can be made to stick will depend upon the further development of a theory of warrant and further investigation of the relations amongst the warrants in play in this particular case.

The charge offered by the “responsibilist” view sketched here does not depend upon any such claims about the relations amongst the relevant warrants. Rather, the charge is that even though one has a mediate warrant to believe Moore-3, one cannot responsibly come to believe Moore-3 for the first time through a line of explicit, conscious reasoning such as Moore 1-3. This is a charge about *acceptable courses of explicit, conscious reasoning*. It commits the view sketched here to the following possibility: that one can have warrant to believe a particular proposition even if one cannot acquire a responsibly held, doxastically justified belief by explicitly reasoning in a way that tracks the structure of the warrant and consciously basing belief in the proposition upon that warranting state or condition. Of course, there are some instances in which one obviously cannot do this, such as the case in which one has warrant to believe p, but has no attitude (not even dispositionally) as to whether the warranting state

or condition tells in favor of the truth of *p*. In that case, deliberating in accordance with the structure of the warrant one has, thereby attempting to base one's belief that *p* upon that warranting state or condition, will not yield a fully epistemically acceptable belief that *p*, at least not in a mature adult. What the view sketched here is committed to, though, is something different: the existence of mediate warrants which are such that it is *not possible* for an ideal rational agent to arrive at a fully epistemically satisfactory, doxastically justified belief by inferring in a way that tracks their structure. This is a surprising result. But I don't think that it is a strike against the view. Consider, for instance the proposition that one currently has no occurrent second-order-beliefs. That's a straightforward example of a proposition which someone could have a warrant for believing but which is such that the person *can't* reasonably come to believe it by reasoning on the basis of that warrant, though the failure in this case is admittedly rather different than the failure charged in the case of the Moorean reasoning.²⁰

Perhaps it would be apt to characterize the failing ascribed to Moore 1-3 as a failing of *doxastic justification* to transmit through an inference. I'm not sure. The core problem is simply this, call it what you like: in the envisioned circumstances, one is not doxastically justified in believing Moore-2 by consciously basing it on one's visual experience. As a consequence, one is not doxastically justified in believing Moore-3 on the basis of Moore-2, just as one would not be doxastically justified in believing *any* conclusion on the basis of Moore-2, since one cannot acquire a doxastically justified belief by explicitly drawing an inference from a belief which is not doxastically justified.

Suppose that we modify the situation slightly, so that one *is* doxastically justified in accepting Moore-3 at the stage in the deliberation just before one accepts Moore-2.

Would the reasoning then exhibit a failure of doxastic justification to transmit through an inference? In such a case, one would acquire a doxastically justified belief in Moore-2. And one would already have a doxastically justified belief in Moore-3. Suppose, then, that one went on to try to base one's belief in Moore-3 on one's belief in Moore-2. We might want to say that at the end of this procedure one's belief in Moore-3 remains doxastically justified. Or we might want to say that it doesn't because this procedure renders one's belief in Moore-3 (at the end) epistemically criticizable. But so far as I can see, not much (if anything) turns on this issue. Either way, we can agree that *something* is going wrong.

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¹ I offer a motivation roughly along these lines in my (2008, sects. 1 and 2).

² This claim is compatible with the second reason offered above for talking in terms of “warrants” rather than in terms of “reasons.” The present claim is a claim about the *sort of thing* warrants are: they are things of a sort that is fitted to play a certain role. But it may be that particular things of that sort on a particular occasion can’t in fact play that role on that occasion despite being things of a kind that are fitted to play that role in general. That would be a case in which a person has a warrant which cannot function as a reason.

³ Some would dispute this claim. I won’t fight that battle here, other than to note that this claim accords well with both our ordinary judgments and scientific practice.

⁴ It is possible to allow that real-world, external states or conditions can constitute defeaters for prima facie or defeasible warrants. In fact, I myself incline towards such a position. Even on such a view, however, we will want to handle defeaters and disabling conditions separately, since the latter, unlike the former, would prevent the putatively warranting state or condition from even defeasibly supporting holding the belief in question.

If we do allow that external states or conditions can constitute defeaters for prima facie, defeasible warrants, it may not be a straightforward matter to provide an exhaustive sorting of possibilities into defeaters or disablers relative to a given warrant. There may be puzzling cases that we don’t know how to resolve. And it may be that whether a given possibility counts as a disabler will depend upon our characterization of the warranting state or condition or of the link between it and the truth of the proposition in question. But none of these difficulties should prevent us from being able to see that certain possibilities, relative to certain warrants, constitute disabling conditions.

⁵ It is common to distinguish *propositional* from *doxastic* justification, where having propositional justification is a status that does not require actually holding the relevant belief. I use the term “doxastic justification” here partly in order to highlight that what I have in mind is a status attaching to a person in relation to an actual belief and partly in virtue of how that belief is held. I should highlight, however, that my use of the term “justification” here differs from what some epistemologists mean by the term, e.g., in discussions of the Gettier problem. Again, I am using it simply as a convenient label that picks up on some features of ordinary and philosophical usage.

⁶ Of course, one can regard something as a disabling condition for a warrant without having the ability to use that precise phrase. It would be enough if one took it (roughly) that if the condition obtained, then the state or condition in question wouldn’t support believing the proposition in question.

It is quite plausible that the considerations adduced in support of the requirement defended in the main text also support a slightly different – and in some respects stronger – requirement, to the effect that if one explicitly and consciously bases a particular belief upon a particular warranting state or condition in the course of explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning, one is thereby committed to taking it to be the case that no possible disabling conditions obtain in relation to that warrant. However, the requirement stressed in the main text is what turns out to carry weight in the criticism of Moorean Dogmatism that will be developed here, and that is why I focus on it instead.

⁷ Nor will my argument depend upon extending such a requirement to cover cases in which a belief is not arrived at through explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning – though I do find some extensions along these lines plausible.

⁸ It is possible to hold that if one has a *prima facie*, defeasible warrant for a particular belief in virtue of having defeasible evidence, that warrant need not itself be defeated if the real-world facts are such as to defeat that evidence. One could hold that only states of the subject defeat warrants. If one held such a view, one might want to deny that in order to responsibly hold a belief on the basis of a particular warrant, one must hold beliefs about the absence of defeaters. One might instead say that for the purposes of responsible belief, the absence of the relevant mental states is sufficient; one needn't also believe that they are absent. However, even on such a view, there is still room for a requirement of the sort I've defended regarding disenablers, so long as one accepts enough of a reliability requirement on warrant to generate the possibility of such things as disenablers in the first place.

⁹ It may be worried that the responsibilist requirements that I have defended here will give rise to problematic regresses. However, if we stick to the letter of these requirements, they will not, since I have not claimed – nor would I claim! – that every doxastically justified belief is (or need be) arrived at through explicit, conscious deliberation or reasoning. However, worries about regresses are certainly raised by the spirit of requirements such as the ones I've defended here. See my (2004) and (2008) for detailed explanations of how problematic regresses can be avoided in this territory.

¹⁰ It is tempting to want a more general characterization of this condition. However, any general characterization will presuppose a substantive account of the way in which these possibilities are “bad” in relation to the beliefs at issue. Articulating and defending such an account is a side issue from the matters I want to pursue here.

¹¹ In considering this thesis, we are of course supposed to bracket any concerns pertaining to the conditions for possessing contentful beliefs about the world at all.

¹² It should be stressed, again, that this situation meets the requirements Pryor sets out. At the relevant stage in the reasoning, one has no attitude at all – not doubt, tendency to believe, balanced credence, or suspension of judgment – about whether one is an evil demon's victim, so one does not have doubts or suspicious of the sort the skeptic aims to induce. One does not take oneself to have any reason for any such doubts. And one has no higher-order beliefs to the effect that one possesses defeaters for or is not warranted in believing any of the relevant beliefs

¹³ It should be noted that the Moorean Dogmatist would not be helped by maintaining that we can have immediate perceptual warrant (provided, e.g., by a visual experience as of one's hands) to believe that one is not a disembodied spirit being deceived by an evil demon. If that were so, then the Moorean reasoning would collapse into one step. But the objection presented above would still apply.

¹⁴ Unless, that is, she maintains that there is some other reason to think that in this case the fact that she took ibuprofen supports the claim that her headache will soon lift. This subtlety is not relevant to the point I want to make.

¹⁵ It might be charged that I have failed to correctly identify the source of our resistance to courses of reasoning like the Moorean reasoning, because we would regard such reasoning as problematic – and in the same way – even for someone who failed to take

the evil demon hypothesis to state a possible disabling condition for the relevant warrants. It is hard to know how to test this charge. But if the thought is that epistemic responsibility precludes one from explicitly reasoning from a warranting state or condition to the non-obtaining of what is in fact (though unbeknownst to one) a disabling condition for that warrant, then the thought is surely incorrect. It is not in general the case that one may not explicitly reason from a warrant to the non-obtaining of a condition that is in fact a disabling condition for that warrant. Suppose, for instance, that without the presence of a certain brain structure, human vision would be pervasively unreliable. The absence of this structure would thus be a disabling condition relative to any visual warrants for beliefs about the world. Suppose, moreover, that no one yet recognizes the importance of this structure for the proper functioning of human vision; there is some question as to whether human beings even possess it, though it has already been identified in other primates (but without any understanding of its function or importance). Now consider the first brain researcher to identify this brain structure in human beings. Suppose that on the basis of visual inspections of brain dissections, he concludes that human beings do indeed possess this structure. In doing so, he bases that belief upon his visual warrant; he thereby consciously and explicitly moves in thought from a visual warrant to the conclusion that a condition does not obtain which (unbeknownst to him) in fact would be a disabling condition for that warrant. Clearly, there is nothing objectionable about this procedure. So there is nothing in principle objectionable about moving from a particular warrant to the conclusion that what is in fact a disabling condition for that warrant does not obtain. I see no reason not to conclude that what crucially matters for our distaste for the Moorean reasoning is something about the reasoner's position, and in particular, stems from the reasoner's recognition that the evil demon possibility is a disabling condition relative to the relevant warrants.

¹⁶ In fact, it could even be reconciled with the claim that one cannot be doxastically justified in holding a belief in virtue of basing it upon an adequate ground unless one has a doxastically justified belief that the ground supports the truth of that belief. All one would have to do is to hold that there can be cases in which one can be immediately doxastically justified in holding a belief without basing it upon any grounds.

¹⁷ This demand may appear to give rise to a vicious regress, but I'm inclined to think that it doesn't. For discussion, see my (2008).

¹⁸ I would like to thank the participants at the Conference on Inferential Internalism held in Fribourg, Switzerland in June, 2008 (especially Gian-Andri Toendury, Martine Nida-Rümelin, and Jim Pryor) and at the 2008 Midwestern Epistemology Workshop (especially Tyler Burge, Al Casullo, and David Henderson). I would also like to acknowledge especially my doctoral student Elizabeth Palmer for helping me see the attractiveness of distinguishing – and combining – considerations about warrant and considerations about responsibility in something like the way urged here. I expect that when it is completed, her work will contribute importantly to our understanding of the way in which experience provides reasons for belief. Thanks too to Jonathan Weinberg, Ram Neta, and especially Katy Abramson for comments and conversation. And, finally, thanks to Jim Pryor for his teaching and guidance, and for providing such a compelling articulation of Moorean Dogmatism.

¹⁹ It is noteworthy that on this rough characterization of the idea, the charge of warrant-transmission failure is parasitic on a denial that we have immediate perceptual warrant for beliefs about the world. It is a tricky question whether there is a version of the charge that does not assume the denial of immediate perceptual warrant. For discussion, see Pryor (forthcoming).

²⁰ This example comes from Juan Comesaña. He isn't to be held responsible for my use of it.