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Alstonian Justification Revisited

In Chapters 2 and 3 I presented an Alstonian version of the parity thesis as well as a challenge to it. I turn now to consider the arguments of several of Alston's more recent essays. In particular I concentrate on those aspects of his thought in which he delineates his more considered account of epistemic justification as well as the claim that one can be justified in believing that an epistemic practice is reliable. My argument is that the claims of these later essays on epistemic justification challenge those of the earlier, raising again the question of the parity thesis: do sense perceptual beliefs and the practice that generates them have the same epistemic status as theistic beliefs and the practice that generates them?¹

1. A warning is needed here. Alston's essays with which I deal in this chapter make several terminological and substantive shifts from "Christian Experience and Christian Belief." Although I believe the development of Alston's thought to be quite consistent, with a clear and fundamentally unchanging understanding of epistemic justification and rationality, his use of terms and emphasis do change occasionally. I attempt to keep the shifts straight and to do so I introduce, by way of suggestion, where I believe his terms and their references overlap. When it is not clearly possible to do so, I note that and let Alston's usage stand while attempting to work around any unclarity to which so doing gives rise.

1. Epistemic Justification Again

In "Concepts of Epistemic Justification" Alston delineates two different kinds, and several subkinds, of epistemic justification. The broad categories for that discussion are what he calls "deontological epistemic justification" and "evaluative epistemic justification":

Deontological Epistemic Justification (J_d): S is J_d in believing that p if and only if in believing that p S is not violating any epistemic obligations.

Evaluative Epistemic Justification (J_e): S is J_e in believing that p if and only if S 's believing that p , as S does, is a good thing from the epistemic point of view.

The "as S does" in the second account is intended to call attention to the particularity of *this* believing rather than believings of p under any conditions.

In a note, Alston points out that he was convinced by Alvin Plantinga that "deontological," rather than "normative," is a more accurate term for what Alston strives to describe in the first account above. This suggests that his account of deontological justification is an extension of the accounts of normative justification provided in his earlier essay. To avoid bogging down in exegetical arguments about shifts in terminology, I simply present Alston's arguments in the new terminology. Thus, in the remainder of this section I spell out in further detail Alston's accounts of J_d and J_e , and related issues, returning later to consider his explanation of how a person can be justified in believing that an epistemic practice is reliable.

Alston rejects the claim that J_d , or any version of it, is the best understanding of justification *from the epistemic point of view*. To understand the central point of Alston's argument against J_d , it is best if we get before us what he takes to be the strongest candidate from among the deontological competitors for epistemic justification. After rejecting a voluntarist account of J_d (because most of our beliefs are not under our direct voluntary control), he suggests

two possible accounts of an involuntarist J_d .² The first, where the subscript "i" stands for "involuntary":

Involuntary J_d (J_{di}): S is J_{di} in believing that p at t if and only if there are no intellectual obligations that (1) have to do with the kind of belief-forming or sustaining habit the activation of which resulted in S 's believing that p at t , or with the particular process of belief formation or sustenance that was involved in S 's believing that p at t , and (2) which are such that (a) S had those obligations prior to t ; (b) S did not fulfill those obligations; and (c) if S had fulfilled those obligations, S would not have believed that p at t .

The second is the same as the first, but (c) is replaced, for reasons I leave up to the reader to fill in, by

(c') if S had fulfilled those obligations, then S 's belief-forming habits would have changed, or S 's access to relevant adverse considerations would have changed, in such a way that S would not have believed that p at t .

Alston rejects the deontological understanding of epistemic justification, for " J_{di} does not give us what we expect. . . . The most serious defect is that it does not hook up in the right way with an adequate, truth-conducive ground." In other words, "I may have done what could reasonably be expected of me in the management and cultivation of my doxastic life, and still hold a belief on outrageously inadequate grounds." There are several possible sources of this discrepancy. One might have grown up in "cultural isolation," following the noetic leadership of the authorities of one's tribe and not having any reasons to reject their authority as reliable. Yet the tradition of the tribe might be very poor reason for believing that p . Or one might be deficient in cognitive powers or have poor training one lacks the time or resources to overcome. Alston writes:

What this spread of cases brings out is that J_{di} is not sufficient for epistemic justification; we may have done the best we can, or at least the best that could reasonably be expected of us, and still be in

2. Alston, "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," pp. 89, 94, 95, 99.

a very poor epistemic position in believing that p ; we could, blamelessly, be believing p for outrageously bad reasons. Even though J_{di} is the closest we can come to a deontological concept of epistemic justification if belief is not under direct voluntary control, it still does not give us what we are looking for.

So Alston rejects deontological justification as the best understanding of epistemic justification; it falls short of what is wanted from the epistemic point of view.³

What account of J_e does Alston give in "Concepts of Epistemic Justification"? Here J_e is an internalist notion with an externalist constraint. Consider the internalist aspect first. There are, says Alston, two popular ideas about what internalism is. The first takes justification to be internal in that "it depends on what support is available for the belief from 'within the subject's perspective,' in the sense of what the subject knows or justifiably believes about the world." The second "takes the 'subject's perspective' to include whatever is 'directly accessible' to the subject, accessible just on the basis of reflection." To these readings Alston adds a third that contrasts with both as well as with reliabilist understandings of justification: "What I take to be internal about justification is that whether a belief is justified depends on what it is based on (grounds); and grounds must be other psychological state(s) of the same subject." He continues: "So in taking it to be conceptually true that one is justified in believing that p iff one's belief that p is based on an adequate ground, I take justification to be 'internal' in that it depends on the way in which the belief stems from the believer's psychological states, which are 'internal' to the subject in an obvious sense." So J_e is an internalist notion.⁴

In "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology" Alston further develops these notions, labeling the first "perspectival internal-

3. Ibid., pp. 95–96. See Alston, "The Deontological Concept of Epistemic Justification," in *Epistemic Justification* (originally in *Philosophical Perspectives* 2 [1988]: 257–99), for an extended discussion of his rejection of deontological concepts of epistemic justification as the central notion of justification given the epistemic point of view.

4. Alston, "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," p. 107. This is in contrast to J_e as Alston describes it elsewhere. In "Christian Experience and Christian Belief," p. 115, he claims that J_e might, when all the hard work is done, boil down to a kind of reliabilist understanding of rationality. His more considered judgment does not, however, ignore reliability, as the next few paragraphs delineate. See note 7 for more detail.

ism" (PI) and the second "access internalism" (AI).⁵ The relationship between the two, Alston says, is that "we can think of AI as a broadening of PI. Whereas PI restricts justifiers to what the subject already justifiably believes . . . AI enlarges that to include what the subject *can* come to know just on reflection. . . . AI, we might say, enlarges the conception of the subject's perspective to include not only what does in fact occur in that perspective . . . but also what *could* be there if the subject were to turn his attention to it." Alston has serious reservations about both PI and AI. He writes that

the only arguments of any substance that have been advanced [in support of PI] proceed from a deontological conception of justification and inherit any disabilities that attach to that conception. Indeed, PI gains significant support only from the most restrictive form of a direct voluntary control version of that conception, one that is, at best, of limited application to our beliefs. As for AI, the arguments in the literature that are designed to establish a direct recognizability version [the strongest version where the justifier is said to be directly recognizable iff S needs only to reflect clear-headedly on the question of whether or not the (justifying) fact obtains in order to know that it does] markedly fail to do so.⁶

Reservations notwithstanding, Alston believes that a moderate version of AI can be supported, although along lines very different from those he considers and rejects in "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology."⁷ This moderate version of AI is, I take it,

5. In "An Internalist Externalism," p. 233, Alston adds another type of internalism, which he calls "consciousness internalism" (CI). CI, Alston argues, has "the crushing disability that one can never complete the formulation of a sufficient condition for justification." But we need not concern ourselves with this version of internalism here. Although Alston distances his own position in "Concepts of Epistemic Justification" from both PI and AI, in "An Internalist Externalism" and in "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology" (also in *Epistemic Justification*; originally in *Philosophical Topics* 14 [1986]: 179–221) he identifies his position with a "moderate AI."

6. Alston, "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology," pp. 214, 224.

7. In note 4 I called attention to a shift in Alston's description of J_c from "Christian Experience and Christian Belief" to "Concepts of Epistemic Justification." In the former essay, p. 115, he writes that "S is justified in the evaluative sense in holding a certain belief provided that the relevant circumstances in which that belief is held are such that the belief is at least likely to be true. In other terms, being J_c requires that in the class of actual and possible cases in which beliefs like

a recast understanding of the third account of internalism Alston notes in “Concepts of Epistemic Justification”—the account making reference to grounds and psychological states. In the moderate version of AI, the accessibility of the states that justify beliefs must not be so demanding as to be unrealistic or so weak as to include too much:

What is needed here is a concept of something like “fairly direct accessibility.” In order that justifiers be generally available for presentation as the legitimizers of the belief, they must be fairly readily available to the subject through some mode of access much quicker than lengthy research, observation, or experimentation. It seems reasonable to follow [Carl] Ginet’s lead and suggest that to be a justifier an item must be the sort of thing that, in general, a subject can explicitly note the presence of just by sufficient reflection on his situation.

Alston goes on to note that he does not know how to make this notion more precise. He summarizes by saying that “to be a justifier of a belief, its ground must be the sort of thing whose instances are fairly directly accessible to their subject on reflection.”⁸

Alston’s defense of this internalist requirement comes as an attempt not to prove its necessity but rather to explain the presence of the requirement. He says that the reason we have the concept of “being justified” in holding a belief flows from the “practice of critical reflection on our beliefs, of challenging their credentials and responding to such challenges—in short the practice of attempting

that are or would be held in circumstances like that, the belief is usually true. Much needs to be done to work out what kinds of circumstances are relevant, how to generalize over beliefs, and so on. Pretending that all that has been done, I would like to suggest that what this boils down to is that the way the belief was formed and/or is sustained is a generally reliable one, one that can generally be relied on to produce true rather than false beliefs.” He continues in a note, p. 133, n. 4: “And not just that the practice has a good track record up to now; rather it is a lawlike truth that beliefs formed in accordance with that practice, in those kinds of circumstances, are at least likely to be true.” Although his more recent work does not totally ignore reliabilist considerations, there is an addition to Alston’s reliabilist demands. Another way of reading these claims, of course, is that the second account of J_c is not intended to be a development of the first. Perhaps, however, there are too many similarities to make this interpretation likely.

8. Alston, “An Internalist Externalism,” p. 238.

to *justify* our beliefs.” Alston is clear that being justified and justifying are not the same thing and argues that the former concept was developed in the context of a demand for the latter. Thus the AI requirement we all have intuitively is a natural result of the social practices in which we engage. Thus epistemic justification is internalist.

But it carries an externalist constraint. In “Concepts of Epistemic Justification” Alston’s concern is to tie the notion of justification to the notion of a truth-conducive ground. He writes that “what a belief is based on we may term the ground of the belief. A ground, in a more dispositional sense of the term, is the sort of item on which a belief can be based.” Furthermore, “we want to leave open at least the *conceptual* possibility of *direct* or *immediate* justification by experience (and perhaps in other ways also), as well as *indirect* or *mediate* justification by relation to other beliefs (inferentially in the most explicit cases). Finally, to say that a subject *has adequate* grounds for her belief that *p* is to say that she has other justified beliefs, or experiences, on which the belief could be based and which are strongly indicative of the truth of the belief.”¹⁰ So the goodness of a belief from the epistemic point of view is its possession of grounds of this type. Thus his final account of J_e , where the subscript “g” stands for “grounds”:¹¹

Grounds J_e (J_{eg}): S is J_{eg} in believing that p if and only if S ’s believing that p , as S did, was a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that S ’s belief that p was based on adequate grounds and S lacked sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary.

How is this position externalist? Alston distances J_{eg} from a straightforwardly reliabilist account of justification. He says that “it may be supposed that J_{eg} as we have explained it, is just reliability of belief formation with an evaluative frosting. For where a belief is based on adequate grounds that belief has been formed in a reliable fashion.” But to take reliability as a criterion of justifica-

9. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

10. Alston, “Concepts of Epistemic Justification,” pp. 100–101.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 106. In this context, a belief’s being “based on” another does not imply inference; see Alston’s discussion on pp. 99–100.

tion, or simply to identify justification with reliability, would be mistaken. The internalist character of justification blocks any such move. Reliable belief formation may occur where the belief is formed on some basis outside the believer's psychological states. In fact, "I might be so constituted that beliefs about the weather tomorrow which apparently just 'pop into my mind' out of nowhere are in fact reliably produced by a mechanism of which we know nothing, and which does not involve the belief being based on anything. Here we would have reliably formed beliefs that are not based on adequate grounds."¹² Since a belief could be reliably formed but not be internal in the requisite sense, justification and reliability are not the same thing. Nevertheless, there is a close relationship between reliability and justification. Alston claims "that the most adequate concept of epistemic justification is one that will put a reliability *constraint* on principles of epistemic justification." He continues: "By a 'reliability constraint' I mean something like this. Take a principle of justification of the form: 'If a belief of type B is based on a ground of type G, then the belief is justified.' This principle is acceptable only if forming a B on the basis of a G is a reliable mode of belief formation. On this view, a reliability claim is imbedded in every claim to justification." Thus, although reliability and justification are not the same thing, they remain intimately connected.¹³

This claim is further explicated and defended in "An Internalist Externalism." Although there are internalist considerations in what the grounds for a belief are, Alston rejects the notion that there is an internalist restriction on the adequacy (as opposed to the existence) of grounds for believing. That the adequacy of the grounds be internal is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for justification. Taking necessity first, PI restrictions on adequacy run into the difficulty of requiring an infinite hierarchy of justified beliefs, for a PI necessary condition would claim something like "one is justified in believing that *p* only if one knows or is justified in believing that the ground of that belief is an adequate one." Since no one can fulfill this requirement without having to be justified on

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 108–9.

13. Alston, "Epistemic Circularity" (in *Epistemic Justification*; originally in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 47 [1986]: 1–30), pp. 321–22.

every new level, a PI restriction cannot be a necessary one. On the other hand, an AI restriction may be construed in this way: "S is justified in believing that p only if S is capable, fairly readily on the basis of reflection, to acquire a justified belief that the ground of S's belief that p is an adequate one." This fails to be necessary in that, although it might be within human capacity to have such justification, "it is by no means always the case that the subject of a justified belief is capable of determining the adequacy of his ground, just by careful reflection on the matter, or, indeed, in any other way." A weaker AI version falls prey to similar difficulties.¹⁴

What about sufficiency? Since the AI requirement is weaker than the PI requirement, it is only necessary, says Alston, to show that the PI requirement is not sufficient. The PI version of sufficiency for adequacy states: "S's belief that p is based on an accessible ground that S is justified in supposing to be adequate."¹⁵ Does this version ensure truth conducivity; what notion of justification is to be used here? If it is not truth-conducive, the internalist moves away from the goals of the epistemic point of view. But it is hard to see that one can appeal to a truth-conducive notion without its involving an externalist appeal. Perhaps one can shift the question to a higher level, but that only weakens the demand momentarily; at some level one must return to externalist requirements or lose the epistemic point of view by appealing to non-truth-conducive grounds. Thus, "in order for my belief that p , which is based on ground G , to be justified, it is quite sufficient, as well as necessary, that G be sufficiently indicative of the truth of p . It is in no way required that I know anything, or be justified in believing anything, about this relationship. No doubt, we sometimes do have justified beliefs about the adequacy of our grounds, and that is certainly a good thing. But that is icing on the cake." There is, then, an externalist constraint on epistemic justification.¹⁶

J_{eg} is an evaluative concept, it does not require that beliefs be within our direct control, it connects belief with the likelihood of truth, it permits the grounds for belief to be within the subject's cognitive states, and finally it allows for some "disagreement over

14. Alston, "An Internalist Externalism," pp. 239–40.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–44.

the precise conditions [of justification] for one or another type of belief.”¹⁷ Alston concludes that, since J_{eg} is the only candidate to exhibit all these desiderata, it is clearly the winner for best candidate for the notion of epistemic justification.

2. The Justification of Reliability Claims

My concerns are the nature of epistemic justification and its connection to the reliability of epistemic practices and beliefs about the reliability of epistemic practices. In the previous section I sketched Alston’s account of the former. Since Alston discusses the latter issue in two different, albeit overlapping ways, it is best if the two approaches are separated. In the remainder of this chapter I deal with what I call Alston’s “direct approach,” leaving the “doxastic practice approach” for Chapter 5.

The direct approach is found in “Epistemic Circularity.” There Alston claims both that one can *be justified* in reliability claims about the procedures and mechanisms by which beliefs are generated and that one can *justify* such reliability claims. In fact, he says, since reliability claims are imbedded in every claim to justification, “what it takes to justify a reliability claim will be at least part of what it takes to justify a justification claim.”¹⁸ How does Alston account for the justification of reliability claims? Relying on the distinction between being justified in a belief p and justifying one’s belief that p , as well as on the notion that some epistemic practices are basic epistemic practices, he argues that one can be justified in reliability claims about practices by appeal to beliefs generated by those practices. This argument involves a kind of circularity in reasoning—what he calls “epistemic circularity”—but this is not a logical circularity and the justification is not thereby vitiated.

Taking sense perception as an example of a source of belief, Alston suggests that its reliability cannot be established in a noncircular fashion. As he did in “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” he continues in “Epistemic Circularity” to call sense perception, as well as other epistemic practices (e.g., memory, introspection, and deductive and inductive reasoning), “basic practices”;

17. Alston, “Concepts of Epistemic Justification,” p. 111.

18. Alston, “Epistemic Circularity,” p. 322.

these are basic sources of belief. He defines basic sources: "O is an (epistemologically) basic source of belief = df. Any (otherwise) cogent argument for the reliability of O will use premises drawn from O."¹⁹ If sense perception is a basic source or practice, then one should expect to find the only means of justifying reliability claims about the practice to be arguments containing premises generated, at some point, by the practice itself.

Such arguments are not logically circular, on Alston's account of logical circularity as he narrows down that notion. Logical circularity involves the conclusion of an argument figuring among the premises. In epistemic circularity, however, what is at stake is not the conclusion (such and such a source of belief is reliable) figuring in the premises. Rather, it is that certain propositions which are true and which are derived from the source shown reliable by the argument are, *in fact*, from the source in question. The conclusion itself does not appear in the premises. The issue is the epistemic status of the premises. Alston's discussion hinges on the distinction between being justified and the activity of justifying. The premises *are* justified, but the conclusion still needs *to be* justified. Alston gives the following example:²⁰

- (1) 1. At t_1 , S_1 formed the perceptual belief that p_1 , and p_1 .
 2. At t_2 , S_2 formed the perceptual belief that p_2 , and p_2 .

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 ·
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Therefore, sense experience is a reliable source of belief.

Here a large number of perceptual beliefs are laid out, and each belief is reported to be true. Supposing that 97 percent of the beliefs were true, this inductive argument, says Alston, would allow its user to become justified in the belief that sense experience is a reliable source of belief. Of course, that sense experience is a reliable source of belief nowhere shows up in the premises, for they are only reports of the formation of sense beliefs and their truth. But the reliability of sense perception is "practically assumed" by

19. *Ibid.*, p. 326.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 327.

the premises. In using argument (1) to establish that sense perception is reliable, one is already, implicitly or explicitly, taking sense perception to be reliable. The need for this presupposition does not result from syntactic or semantic considerations: it is a result of neither the logical form of the argument nor the meaning of the premises. It is, rather, the result of our epistemic situation as humans.²¹ It is an “epistemic presupposition,” and the circularity to which it is tied is an “epistemic circularity.”

Arguments such as (1) can be used to justify the belief that sense perception is reliable only if some principle of justification such as (2) is true:²²

- (2) If one believes that p on the basis of its sensorily appearing to one that p , and one has no overriding reasons to the contrary, one is justified in believing that p .

All it takes to be justified in a perceptual belief, if (2) is true, is that the belief come from one's experience in a certain way, given the absence of overriding conditions militating against the truth of the belief. One need not also be justified in accepting (2) or any related or similar reliability principle. One does not have to be justified in believing the conclusion of (1) in order for (1) to provide justification for one's belief in that conclusion. Thus (1) can be used to justify one's belief that sense perception is reliable, if some principle such as (2) is true. Furthermore, (1) continues to provide justification even if one moves from implicitly assuming that sense perception is reliable to being explicitly aware that one is assuming it. The force of the argument is not lost by one becoming more clear about where the force lies, says Alston.

Such epistemically circular arguments cannot be used rationally to produce conviction that sense perception (or any other belief source) is reliable. One already has that conviction by practical assumption. Nor, says Alston, can one provide what he calls “full reflective justification,” where he means that not only is a given belief p shown to be justified but all other beliefs used in the justification of p are shown to be justified. When a belief is fully reflec-

21. *Ibid.*, p. 328.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 331.

tively justified, "no questions are left over as to whether the subject is justified in accepting some premise that is used at some stage of the justification."²³ There are limits on justification; one cannot justify everything at once. To do so, or at least to attempt to do so, does involve one in logical circularity. To demand full reflective justification is to demand too much. To recognize the limitations on our reasoning power is simply to recognize the humble state of our epistemic situation. It does not commit one to the more radical forms of skepticism.

Thus, according to Alston, not only can one justify one's belief that a source is reliable but one can be justified in it. By way of summary, it is worth quoting Alston at length:

We are interested not only in the prospects of an argument like [(1)] being used to *justify* belief in [the reliability of sense perception], but also in the prospects of one's *being justified* in believing [that sense perception is reliable] by virtue of the reasons embodied in the premises of [(1)]. The distinction being invoked here is that between the *activity* of *justifying* a belief that *p* by producing some argument for *p*, and the *state* of *being justified* in believing that *p*. Of course one way to get into that state is to *justify* one's belief by an argument. We have already seen that this is possible with [(1)]. However, it is a truism in epistemology that one may be justified in believing that *p*, even on the basis of reasons, without having argued from those reasons to *p*, and thus without having engaged in the activity of justifying the belief. Since we do not often engage in such activities we would have precious few justified beliefs if this were not the case. Indeed, we have exploited this possibility in claiming that one may *be justified* in accepting the premises of [(1)] without having justified them by argument. If the latter were required one would have to appeal to [the claim that sense perception is reliable] as a premise, and the enterprise of justifying [that sense perception is reliable] would run into logical circularity. It even seems possible to be justified, on the basis of reasons, in believing that *p* without so much as being able to produce an argument from those reasons to *p*. It may be that the reasons are too complex, too subtle, or otherwise too deeply hidden (or the subject too inarticulate), for the subject to recover and wield those reasons.²⁴

23. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 334–35.

3. Alstonian Justification Old and New

What relationships hold between the older accounts of J_e , J_{nw} , and J_{ns} , on the one hand, and J_{di} and J_{eg} on the other? And what results can we expect for the claims of “Christian Experience and Christian Belief” and, in particular, the parity thesis, given the arguments of “Epistemic Circularity” and “Concepts of Epistemic Justification”?

I do not think a detailed correlation between the older notions—from “Christian Experience and Christian Belief”—and the newer—from the other essays I have considered—is easy to provide. There are, however, some more or less general correlations. For example, J_n is clearly the ancestor of J_d , since both are explained in exactly the same terms. We can thus take Alston’s concern in “Christian Experience and Christian Belief” to be the same as that in “Epistemic Circularity” and “Concepts of Epistemic Justification”; that is, we can work on the premise that the former essay takes J_{ns} and J_{nw} as accounts of justification which are in competition with J_{eg} . All are possible accounts of the justification of beliefs from the epistemic point of view.

What follows from this alignment? First, the arguments showing that J_{di} is not the best candidate for justification from the epistemic point of view seem to apply equally well to J_{nw} . This point does not, however, refute the argument of “Christian Experience and Christian Belief.” One might still be J_{nw} in holding a belief p even though one does not have the *best* kind of epistemic justification. And J_e may remain out of the believer’s reach.

In the earlier work, however, Alston claims that one could never have sufficient reasons for taking a practice or its deliverances to be J_e (even though they might be J_e). He concludes there that, although PP and CP *could* both be J_e , the best we can have is J_{nw} for engaging in either of them. Thus Alston writes that, “if we are to have any chance of acquiring knowledge, we must simply go along with our natural reactions of trust with respect to at least some basic sources of belief, provided we lack sufficient reason for regarding them as unreliable.”²⁵ We must, that is, take J_{nw} as the best we can do and trust that it will lead us to the right practices—

25. Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” p. 119.

practices that are in fact J_e . But why should we take J_{nw} beliefs and practices to move us toward J_e ? Other than that we have nowhere else to turn, Alston gives no reason in the earlier essay. He seems to have shifted his position on this matter in "Epistemic Circularity," however, for he argues that one can both justify a belief that a practice is reliable and be justified in such a belief (even if one has not attempted to justify it). And this is done, importantly, on the basis of *reasons*.

If Alston is right in the claims of "Epistemic Circularity" and "Concepts of Epistemic Justification," then perhaps his claim in "Christian Experience and Christian Belief" that one cannot be J_{ns} in engaging in a basic practice is incorrect. One can, according to his later argument, have good reasons to engage in a basic practice, even though those reasons are circular. And Alston himself says that, "if I set out to discover whether a practice is J_e , that is, whether it is reliable, then I will also be investigating the question of whether one *could* be J_{ns} in engaging in that practice."²⁶ Once one discovers that there are reasons to think the practice reliable and that those reasons are one's own, then surely one finds not just that one could be J_{ns} in engaging in the practice but that one is J_{ns} in engaging in it, that is, unless J_{ns} requires that the reasons for supposing a practice reliable be somehow outside the practice itself. It is possible that Alston did think, at the writing of the earlier essay, that the reasons must not be circular, that they must be outside the practice. The whole notion of a practice being basic relies on the presence of circularity in attempts at justification. But even if Alston did think that at an earlier time, he apparently became convinced that some kinds of circularity—such as epistemic circularity—are acceptable means to epistemic justification.

So it appears that one can be J_{ns} in engaging in a basic practice—that is, that one has some reasons for taking a basic practice to be reliable. And it is a clear inference from "Epistemic Circularity" and "Concepts of Epistemic Justification" that one can be J_{ns} in a practice, at least as far as having reasons is concerned. What is not clear is whether one has met the normative demands of J_{ns} simply by having reasons or whether some further conditions need to be met. I suspect there are further conditions, but Alston does not

26. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

specify what they are. But even if he did, would it be worth finding out about those conditions if, in fact, normative or deontological accounts of justification do not give us what we desire in terms of the epistemic point of view? If one could provide reasons for the claim that a practice is reliable, would one not want to understand those reasons as providing evaluative justification for the practice rather than normative or deontological justification? I believe so. The really important question, from the epistemic point of view, is whether one can be J_{eg} in a belief that a practice is reliable. I believe Alston provides the structure that permits an affirmative reply to this question.

How would the basic structure of arguments for a belief that some practice is reliable look? Generalizing from Alston's example, such an argument would rely on some principle such as this:

- (3) If S believes that p on the basis of p 's being delivered to S by epistemic practice EP , and S has no overriding reasons to the contrary, S is justified in believing that p .

Given the truth of (3), S can justifiably hold propositions such as this:

- (4) At t , S formed the EP belief that p , and p .

Now, S need not be justified in holding the epistemic principle (3). Such a requirement would lead to logical circularity. But because of that principle, S can be justified in holding propositions having the same form as (4). But then S can string together propositions in the form of (4) to produce an inductive argument to the conclusion that EP is reliable.

But what happens if the justification being demanded is of the J_{eg} type? Let us call the belief that some practice is reliable R . For S to be J_{eg} in believing R , it would have to be the case that S 's believing that R , as S does, is a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that S 's belief that R is based on adequate grounds and S lacks sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary. This is simply an application of Alston's general account of J_{eg} . Let us assume that there are no overriding conditions. Thus what is important is that S have adequate grounds for believing R . According to Alston's account, to have adequate grounds for a belief such as R , one need

only have adequate (although epistemically circular) reasons. So let us say that at t_1 the practice in question generates belief p_1 , at t_2 it generates p_2 , and so on. Suppose further that 97 percent of these beliefs are true. S can thus conclude that the practice is reliable, and hence S is justified in believing R .

Now, what we are after is whether this justification is the kind specified by the account of J_{eg} . It is *as long as inductive reasoning as a source of belief is in fact reliable*. Is it? One way to answer that question is to explore whether the belief that it is reliable is J_{eg} . But one's *initial* justification of R does not rely on whether one has justified the further belief that induction is reliable. One need only *be* justified in that belief. So it appears that one can be J_{eg} in a belief that a practice is reliable.

Not only can one be J_{eg} in the belief that the practice is reliable, but by extension it seems that one can be J_{eg} in engaging in the practice itself. Here is an account of J_{eg} applied to practices rather than beliefs:

Grounds* J_e (J_{eg}^*) S is J_{eg}^* in engaging in an epistemic practice EP iff S 's engaging in EP , as S does, is a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that S 's engaging in EP is based on adequate grounds and S lacks sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary.

Here something needs to be said about the notion of adequate grounds for engaging in an epistemic practice. Alston says that a ground for a belief is "the sort of item on which a belief can be based." But basing a belief on a ground is not obviously the same as basing one's engaging in a practice on a ground. Nevertheless, perhaps it is enough if we piggyback the notion of grounds for engaging in a practice on the grounds for a belief that that practice is reliable. (Here we have a sufficient but perhaps not a necessary condition for grounds for engaging in a practice. There may be other ways of having grounds for engaging in a practice besides a [justified] belief that the practice is reliable.) So, the sort of thing that one can base one's engaging in a practice on is a belief that in turn has grounds. Add to all this that these latter grounds are adequate and by extension that the grounds for engaging in a practice are adequate. In the case under consideration, what would the ade-

quate grounds be? Surely by Alston's own account, if one is justified via an argument that rests on reliably formed beliefs (even if it is epistemically circular) in the *belief* that the practice is reliable, then one is justified in engaging in the practice. This all seems consonant with Alston's claim that "a particular belief is justified if and only if we are justified in engaging in a certain epistemic practice."²⁷ Although this claim does not demand that one is justified in a belief p if and only if one is justified in the second-order *belief* that the practice that generates p is justified, my argument shows that one can both justify and be justified in holding the second-order belief and thus that engaging in the practice believed to be justified is justified and hence that beliefs generated by the practice, such as p , are justified. Although not required by his claim, the justification of the second-order belief (in the reliability of the practice) seems to show that one is justified in engaging in the practice and thus, to borrow Alston's metaphor, is icing on the epistemological cake.

So it appears on this interpretation that one can be J_{eg} in the belief that a practice is reliable. By extension, one can be J_{eg}^* in engaging in that practice. I noted above that the question of J_{ns} may be less important than "Christian Experience and Christian Belief" suggests, given that we could have J_{eg} for a practice. Nevertheless, it seems that one could also be J_{ns} in engaging in a basic practice. One already has the reasons needed. All that is required beyond those reasons is whatever it takes to meet the normative demands. Given that those are met, one could have J_{ns} for the belief that a practice is reliable. Thus one could be J_{ns} in engaging in a practice and thus, according to Alston's own argument, one could be J_{ns} in engaging in PP. This is quite a different result from that suggested in "Christian Experience and Christian Belief." So, by Alston's later arguments, one could be both J_{eg}^* and J_{ns} in engaging in PP, not only J_{nw} in so doing.

This conclusion raises several questions about PT_A . Although the original version may be true—both CP and PP may be J_{nw} (here I am ignoring the background belief challenge)—much of our interest in PT_A derives from the supposition that neither PP nor CP can do any better than J_{nw} . It appears that PP can do better, by Alston's own argument. Now the question is whether CP can

27. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

do as well. Can a person be J_{eg}^* or J_{ns} in engaging in CP? Could Alston suggest a new, and stronger, version of the parity thesis? Let us consider J_{eg}^* , since Alston claims that its near relative, J_{eg} , is the understanding of epistemic justification that has the most going for it from the epistemic point of view. Might Alston suggest, for example, the following:

Parity Thesis_{Alston Strong} (PT_{AS}): Under appropriate conditions, both S 's engaging in CP and S 's engaging in PP are J_{eg}^* .

Might he then continue by claiming that PT_{AS} is true? PP, it has been argued, can be J_{eg}^* . CP's having the same status rests on the provision of reasons for the reliability of CP. Can such reasons be given?

4. A Challenge to Alston's Strong Parity Thesis

One challenge to PT_{AS} can be seen if we return to the argument presented above for the claim that one can be J_{eg} in believing that a practice is reliable and apply it to the question of CP's reliability. The resulting argument looks like this: for S to be J_{eg} in believing that CP is reliable, it would have to be the case that S 's believing that CP is reliable is a good thing from the epistemic point of view, in that S 's believing that CP is reliable is based on adequate grounds and S lacks sufficient overriding reasons to the contrary. Assuming that there are no overriding conditions, what would the adequate grounds have to be for S 's belief that CP is reliable to be J_{eg} ? One needs adequate (albeit epistemically circular) reasons. So let us say that CP produces beliefs p_1 , p_2 , p_3 , and so forth, and that these beliefs (or a large percentage of them) are true. At this point the argument appeals to induction to move from these beliefs to the general belief that CP is reliable.

But here the argument runs afoul. With PP a large number of beliefs are generated, literally tens of thousands, so that the inductive base for the general conclusion that PP is reliable is sufficiently strong to support the conclusion. But one must wonder, just when does an inductive argument become a strong one? How many beliefs does one need in the inductive base? Is there a sufficiently large base of beliefs generated by CP? In some cases perhaps there are,

but one suspects that often the inductive base is not strong enough. How often does the Christian believer employ CP (or how often does CP work in her)? And does the believer trust her ability to use CP well enough to trust its deliverances? These are important issues, but there are more pressing questions to ask.

First, it appears that any attempt to produce an overall justificatory argument for the reliability of a practice appeals to an inductive subargument; that is, the inductive subargument is essential to the overall argument. No substitution is available. Second, the appeal to induction assumes that the belief-forming practice is something we can test by applying it more than once. Third, the use of induction rests on the assumption that the things about which the induction is made are regular and predictive. Since the last two points are intimately connected, I deal with them more or less together.

Of the first point, let me say that Alston's subargument is an inductive track-record argument. Is the inductive track-record subargument essential? The first point to make is that, even if it is not, Alston's argument uses one. As far as the argument I have constructed (and now criticize) follows Alston's reasoning, if my argument is successful, I have at least shown that PT_{AS} cannot be defended by that kind of argument. But then how could it be defended? There needs to be some positive argument. Perhaps there are other kinds of inductive arguments to which one might appeal—an inference to the best explanation, for example. But the points I make here about God's unpredictability seem to infect all inductive subarguments, of the track-record variety or not. And so I cast the following comments in general terms about induction.

What of noninductive arguments? It is hard to see what they might be, in this case. To avoid logical (but allow epistemic) circularity, it is hard to see that any premise that allows a deductive move to the needed conclusion is forthcoming. Alston begins with a practical assumption of reliability, and this gets the argument off the ground. But if one begins with practicality alone, one ends with practicality alone if the logical moves are deductive. So it looks as if an inductive subargument of some type is needed.

Induction is an epistemic practice in which we appeal to past states of affairs and infer that these will continue into the future or we appeal to the presence of certain qualities or properties in ob-

jects and infer that these will be present in the future, and the like. In other words, induction assumes that the objects with which it deals do not change, at least radically, from one moment to the next, or that the changes themselves are regularly repeating changes, and that a good case can be made from the past into the future. PP likewise deals with objects (or changes) that are regular and predictive. It is natural, in fact, to link our practice of induction to the practice of perception, understanding the two as rising together in our cognitive past. Although not the same thing, induction and PP make similar assumptions about their subject matters. The key assumption for our purposes is that the objects with which they deal are predictable. Thus, since both PP and induction work well in their dealings with the physical world, the appeal to inductive principles to show the reliability of PP is both natural and, it seems, legitimate. It is, as Alston admits, built into PP that the objects that are its central concern are the kind of objects about which predictions can be made. Predictions are likewise the heart-beat of induction. With these predictions we can anticipate and control, to some extent, physical objects.

With CP, however, the connections with induction are much less clear. If, for example, the applicability of induction to a set of objects assumes that those objects do not change (in important ways) over time, or that any changes are predictable, and yet God does change (at least in unpredictable ways in his actions toward us), of what use is an inductive argument to show that the practice through which we have access to God—CP—is reliable? The issue here is really one of the nature of the practice as well as of the objects the practice supposedly accesses. With PP, the practice's ostensible predictive nature cannot be separated from the ostensible nature of the objects with which it deals. Of course one can safely infer from the past activity of this or that physical object to its future; that is part and parcel of the conceptual scheme of PP. On the other hand, if the nature of the practice is so intimately tied to the nature of its objects, and God is not predictable, then why would CP be predictable? It is not, as Alston admits. But then in what way can one appeal to an inductive argument to show that CP is reliable? Unlike stones and trees, God is not predictable; we cannot assume he will be or act in the future as he was or did in the

past or that CP will give us access to him in the future as it has in the past. God and his activities are not capable of being anticipated or controlled.²⁸

Does this mean simply that one does not have, or at least that one cannot count on, a large number of generated beliefs from which to infer inductively a claim of reliability, as I suggested earlier? No, my suggestion here is stronger than that. I mean to say that no induction from the past engagements of CP can be used legitimately as an inductive base. It is part of the understanding of the world that is embedded in CP (or in which CP is embedded) that God does not have to give us any information. In fact, Alston argues that, given the assumptions that God is somewhat mysterious and that he has made us such that we cannot discern regularities in his nature and activities, then “if an epistemic practice were to lead us to suppose that we had discovered regular patterns in the divine behavior or that divine activity is equally discernible by all, that would be a reason for regarding the practice as *unreliable*.”²⁹ If the assumption about the indiscernibility of regularity in God’s nature and activities is correct, then how could one safely infer from the past deliverances of CP that it is reliable? And if the inductive subargument is irreplaceable in the overall justificatory argument, then a belief that CP is reliable cannot be justified by that larger argument.

Alston has suggested in correspondence that my discussion does not take into account that, whereas “induction concerns the relations between beliefs and facts that make the beliefs true (where they are true), what is unpredictable is the object the beliefs are about. So that it is one thing that is unpredictable (God) and another thing that is the topic of the induction (truth about beliefs

28. There is a potential problem with this suggestion, since it is a mainstream belief of Christians that God is constant and dependable. How is one to square the (apparent) nonpredictability of God with his purported dependability and constancy? I do not know how to resolve this problem except to suggest that, even if God is ultimately or finally dependable, nothing we know about him gives us insight into how he will carry out this dependability. It does not, in short, seem obviously contradictory to say that God is dependable but nonpredictable or that he is faithful but full of surprises. My challenge deals only with the apparent element of surprise in God’s ways of dealing with humanity.

29. Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” p. 129.

about God when formed in a certain way)."³⁰ This distinction is a good one. Let us see how it affects my argument.

An inductive subargument for the reliability of CP, following Alston's pattern, looks something like this:

- (5) 1. At t_1 , S_1 formed the CP belief that p_1 , and p_1 .
 2. At t_2 , S_2 formed the CP belief that p_2 , and p_2 .

.
 .
 .

Therefore, CP is a reliable source of belief.

Alston's note calls attention to the fact that the basis for the induction is the relationship between the conjuncts of the premises, and the issue is not, therefore, one of predictability or nonpredictability. The move to the generalization is not based directly on the facts about the object of the belief (in this case God) but on the fact that the beliefs generated by CP are true. So it does not matter, for the efficacy of the induction, whether the objects of the beliefs are predictable or not.

Although I agree with Alston's basic point that the induction itself is based on the relationship between the conjuncts of the premises, there remains something curious about CP. This feature of CP calls special attention to the object of the beliefs generated by CP in an inductive argument supporting CP's reliability. PP is a practice over which we have some control. If we do not wish to form visual beliefs, we can close our eyes. If we do not wish to form auditory beliefs, we can plug our ears. And so forth. Even though we are constantly bombarded, during our waking hours, with sensory information, there are certain measures we can take to control how PP works with that information. The corollary to this point is that generally the objects about which PP generates beliefs are always present to us. They are constant and predictably so. Thus we know what to do to engage in PP. We also know perfectly well what it would be to use PP to generate beliefs and then to reuse PP to validate those same beliefs. But it is less than clear that we know the same about CP. Even if we do have beliefs

30. Personal letter dated November 26, 1990.

delivered to us by CP, it, unlike PP, is not the kind of practice we can call up on demand. We cannot simply turn our head in the right direction and use or apply CP. Having received some information by sight, I can return again to that spot and use sight to validate the original belief. But what do I do having received the information that God wants me to spend most of my time on philosophical theology rather than other philosophical concerns? How do I reuse CP to test that belief?

Perhaps there are certain things the Christian can do. For example, one subpractice of CP may be reading Scripture. Insofar as it is, the Christian can pick up the Bible and read it, just as with PP one can open one's eyes and look again. When we open our eyes and turn our head in the right direction we can, more or less, trust that our sight gives us the information needed to validate our earlier belief. But God need not reveal himself to us today when we read the Scriptures, and thus the testability of CP lacks the kind of repeatability of PP. And this brings us to my main reply to Alston's criticism. The objects of beliefs generated by PP do not *do* anything to lead us to engage in PP. There is no conscious decision or motivation on their part to initiate PP for us. This is not true with CP. Presumably God must initiate CP. The unpredictability of God, therefore, indicates that no inductive move from CP-generated beliefs and their corresponding truth-making facts can provide sufficient grounds for concluding that CP is reliable (or will be reliable in the future). CP may work in entirely different ways each times in operates. A lack of predictability on God's part does lead to the failure of the inductive argument needed to show CP reliable.

Furthermore, the predictability of the objects of PP beliefs is precisely what makes the repeatability of our engaging in PP possible. This repeatability allows for a kind of commitment to PP's reliability that in turn gets the inductive argument going. Here I shift to discuss the premises of Alston's argument, and hence it is Alston's "practical assumption" that is at stake. The move from the generation of true perceptual beliefs (from experience and PP) to the claim that PP is reliable depends on the practical assumption that PP is reliable. This assumption must only be practical, of course; otherwise one is involved in a logical rather than epistemic circle. But how can one make even the practical assumption? We

make it, I believe, because the deliverances of PP are so well confirmed by the past predictive power of induction and PP. It is this (predictive kind of) confirmation that “indicates” (“betokens,” “manifests”) PP’s reliability in the first place.³¹ But this confirmation is internal to the practice itself: induction seems either part and parcel of PP or so intimately connected that one cannot engage in induction without relying on PP (or other practices dealing with predictable objects) and its internal assumptions. Thus one should not view the (predictive) confirmation of the practice’s deliverances as independent grounds or reasons for taking the practice to be reliable. Nevertheless, confirmation may generate an initial trust in the practice and hence the practical assumption is not irrational. I am sure Alston would not take just any practice—let us say my taking the pain in my knee to indicate that a Canadian hockey team will take the Stanley Cup—as a practice one can practically assume to be reliable. The presence of a reliability indicator is what suggests the practical assumption in the first place.

So, in addition to the move from the premises to the conclusion relying on the predictive nature of the objects, the internal (predictive) confirmation of beliefs also depends on the regularity of the objects over which the practice generating those beliefs ranges. With CP such (predictive) confirmation appears not to be present. The objects of the practice (God and his activities) are not regular or predictable. Insofar as they are not, the practical assumption does not seem plausible. There is no indicator of reliability to suggest that one make a practical assumption. So, although one need not go on to show that induction itself is a reliable source of belief, one must have an argument with a strong enough set of beliefs to make a sound inductive move. CP appears to lack such a base, for the practical assumption of CP’s reliability does not have the network of confirmation that the related PP assumption has. Thus, although PP is J_{eg}^* —one can generate an inductive, albeit epistemically circular, argument for the reliability of PP—CP appears not to be, since the requisite argument slips in some assumptions about the nature of CP and its objects which are not true of that practice.

31. See Alston, “Christian Experience and Christian Belief,” p. 125, for a full explanation of these terms. See Chapter 10, and Mark S. McLeod, “Can Belief in God Be Confirmed?” *Religious Studies* 24 (1988): 311–23, for further development of this and a nonpredictive kind of confirmation.

I am suggesting, then, that although there may be an argument justifying the belief that PP is reliable, insofar as that argument rests on induction there can be no parallel argument for CP. There are two points to my argument. First, because of the unpredictable nature of the object of CP, one cannot go from the premises (which contain truth claims about CP's deliverances) to the conclusion about CP's reliability. Second, not even the initial practical assumption about CP's reliability is well founded, since, once again, the nature of the object of CP does not allow for the internal confirmatory platform that would lead one to make the practical assumption in the first place. These two issues are connected, because both rely on the unpredictability of God. So what suggests a lack of force behind the practical assumption for CP turns out ultimately to challenge the move from the premises, even if true, to the conclusion.

Does Alston have a response? He admits (and, in fact, makes "epistemological hay out of") the fact that PP has confirmation and predictive power whereas CP does not. On the basis of this kind of observation, says Alston, some have rejected the reliability of CP. He goes on to argue, however, that although confirmation and predictive power are indicative of reliability, they are not necessary for reliability. Can Alston use a related response against my suggestions, claiming, for example, that CP need not have confirmation and yet can still be legitimately practically assumed to be reliable? I think not. It is true that a practice could be reliable and its deliverances not be confirmed. Still, the argument under consideration, taken as a whole, relies on induction. Inductive arguments can have success only where the base allows a predictive move from the past to the future. With a well-confirmed base such moves are plausible. As we have seen, this issue arises at two stages, with the practical assumption and with the move from premises to conclusion. With CP, however, the predictive application to future cases appears risky both with regard to the main argument and with regard to the initial confirmation that might suggest the practical assumption in the first place. The predictive repeatability simply seems absent. What other reliability indicator is available? None, and thus, insofar as Alston's argument requires induction, we cannot make an appeal to the argument to show that CP is J_{eg}^* . Alston's move earlier to ignore CP's lack of confirma-

tion, and his subsequent claim that CP can be J_{nw} , does not rely on an inductive argument. In fact, J_{nw} does not rely on argument at all. In the case of J_{nw} , Alston's concern is with reasons against the reliability of CP, and lacking confirmation and predictability does not constitute a reason against reliability. But with J_{eg}^* the case is different, for now we are dealing with a lack of reasons *for* reliability. J_{eg}^* demands positive reasons and those simply are not, and perhaps cannot be, provided by CP. So PT_{AS} appears not to be true.

Alston does say that CP has its own internal self-support. Does this help him with PT_{AS} ? CP's self-support comes in terms of spiritual development which, Alston suggests, is internal to the practice. What is spiritual development?

CMP [CP], including the associated Christian scheme that has been built up over the centuries, generates, among much else, the belief that God has made certain promises of the destiny that awaits us if we follow the way of life enjoined on us by Christ. We are told that if we will turn from our sinful ways, reorder our priorities, take a break from preoccupation with our self-centered aims long enough to open ourselves to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, then we will experience a transformation into the kind of nonpossessive, nondefensive, loving, caring, and sincere persons God has destined us to become.

This brief account does not do full justice to the notion of spiritual development. Nevertheless, some Christians do develop in these ways, and this provides some type of self-support for CP. Even so, if we pay attention to the ways Christians treat their spiritual development, we note that there is no predictive guarantee that someone will mature as a Christian believer. Alston himself writes that this development happens "not immediately and not without many ups and downs."³² This is no surprise, for we are dealing with humans and their foibles, as well as with a God about whom even believers are hesitant to predict things. And there is, of course, much more to be said here.

But the main point is that spiritual development is also unpredictable and that this indicates the unlikelihood that even an

32. Alston, *Perceiving God*, p. 252.

inductive argument bolstered with spiritual development as internal support can be used to move one to a justified belief in reliability.

Since the inductive argument is so prominent in the overall justificatory argument, its absence effectively kills the justificatory argument and hence the claim that one can be J_{eg} in a belief that CP is reliable. Can one use the self-support of spiritual formation as an *indicator* of reliability, that is, as enough for a practical assumption of reliability? Perhaps, for spiritual development does occur among those involved in CP, and there is a kind of confirmation that attaches to CP because of the spiritual development of its practitioners. This is not a predictive kind of confirmation, however, and an inductive argument based on it would be shaky at best. I have more to say about the notion of a nonpredictive confirmation in Chapters 10 and 11, and I postpone detailed discussion until then.

I believe it is safe to conclude that PT_{AS} is false. What about the J_{ns} of CP? For the reasons presented against the J_{eg} of CP, its J_{ns} must be rejected as well. Thus although PP may be, according to some of Alston's work, J_{ns} , CP cannot be. And in the case of CP, one cannot know that it is J_{eg} .

I have argued that some of Alston's more recent work militates against the conclusions of his earlier work. A stronger parity thesis emerges from this more recent work. But PT_{AS} fails because of a lack of inductive support for CP's reliability. There is one final consideration that raises serious questions about PT_{AS} . I turn to explore Alston's doxastic practice approach to epistemology in the next chapter.