CrossMark

Episteme (2021), **18**, 555–575
doi:10.1017/epi.2019.26

episteme

ARTICLE

Reflective Access, Closure, and Epistemological Disjunctivism

Giada Fratantonio*

University of Helsinki, Finland
*Corresponding author. Email: giada.fratantonio@gmail.com

(Received 3 May 2018; revised 11 April 2019; accepted 3 July 2019; first published online 27 August 2019)

Abstract

In this paper, I consider the so-called Access Problem for Duncan Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism (2012). After reconstructing Pritchard's own response to the Access Problem, I argue that in order to assess whether Pritchard's response is a satisfying one, we first need an account of the notion of 'Reflective Access' that underpins Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism. I provide three interpretations of the notion of Reflective Access: a metaphysical interpretation, a folk interpretation, and an epistemic interpretation. I argue that none of these three interpretations comes without problems. I conclude that, until we have a clear and unproblematic account of Reflective Access, the Access Problem remains a challenge for Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism.

Keywords: Epistemological Disjunctivism; Access Problem; Externalism/Internalism; Epistemic Closure Principle; Reflective Access; McKinsey-paradox

Introduction

According to Duncan Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism:

> In paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge, an agent, S, has perceptual knowledge that P in virtue of being in possession of rational support, R [i.e., S's *seeing that*], for her belief that P which is both factive (i.e., R's obtaining entails P) and reflectively accessible. (Pritchard 2012: 13)

In a context in which epistemology has been centred on the opposition between internalism and externalism, Epistemological Disjunctivism (henceforth, ED) seems to offer (if true) a middle way which would not force us to choose one side over the other. By requiring one's rational support to be both reflectively accessible and factive,[1] ED combines the insights underpinning both epistemic internalism and epistemic externalism respectively. On the one hand, the accessibility requirement enables

[1]Note that Pritchard's use of 'factive' here differs from what epistemologists often have in mind when talking about 'factive' evidence/justification. While epistemologists traditionally refer to the idea that evidence/justification is constituted by true propositions, Pritchard merely refers to the truth-entailing nature of one's rational support.

© Cambridge University Press 2019

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Pritchard to account for the (internalist)[2] intuition that the notion of justification should be considered in relation to the notion of epistemic responsibility (Pritchard 2012: 2). On the other hand, the factivity requirement accommodates the (externalist) intuition that there must be a connection between the truth of the proposition and the reason why one believes such proposition. A further motivation that makes Pritchard's disjunctivism a very appealing view is that it combines internalism and externalism in such a way that it (allegedly) offers a neo-Moorean-style solution to the underdetermination-based sceptical paradox, while leaving our common pre-theoretical intuitions untouched (Pritchard 2012, 2016). If true, ED would thus represent, according to Pritchard, the *holy grail* of epistemology. However, in his book, Pritchard anticipates what he takes to be three *prima facie* problems for his view: the Access Problem, the Basis Problem, and The Distinguishability Problem. While many of the critics have focused on the last two problems, as well as on whether Pritchard's disjunctivism is really able to solve a version of the sceptical paradox, not much attention has been devoted to the so-called Access Problem.[3] In this paper, I will focus on this more neglected argument, thus hoping to foster and expand the debate around this issue. After clarifying the nature of the problem (Section 1), and considering Pritchard's response to this challenge, I point out that in order to assess whether Pritchard's response is a satisfying one, we first need to have a better idea of what it takes for someone to have 'Reflective Access' of one's rational support R (Section 2). In particular, Pritchard has to provide an account of reflective knowledge that predicts (i) that one can have purely reflective knowledge of one's empirical rational support (*seeing that*), and (ii) that one does not have purely reflective knowledge of what one's rational support entails (P). This turns out to be a very difficult task. After considering three possible ways of cashing out the notion of Reflective Access, I show that none of them enables us to satisfyingly resist the Access Problem (Sections 3 and 4). Finally, I consider Tim Kraft's paper (Kraft 2015), in which he offers a different diagnosis of why Pritchard's response to the Access Problem is unsatisfying. I argue that the source/content distinction he appeals to is unconvincing and leads to undesirable results (Section 5). This shows why my diagnosis should be preferred. I conclude that, as it stands, the Access Problem represents a real challenge for Pritchard's view. More interestingly, I conclude that the arguments I have provided shed light on a general problematic feature of Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism, namely, the lack of an unambiguous and unproblematic account of reflective knowledge (Section 6).

1. Epistemological Disjunctivism and the Access Problem

In his *Epistemological Disjunctivism* (Pritchard 2012), Duncan Pritchard addresses the so-called Access Problem as representing a *prima facie* challenge for his view. Before describing the Access Problem in detail, it is worth mentioning that Pritchard takes this problem to mirror the more notorious McKinsey paradox allegedly showing the incompatibility between Content Externalism and Privileged Access. Take Privileged Access to be, roughly put, the thesis that one can know by reflection the content of

[2]For a variety of internalism about justification that rejects the accessibility requirement, namely, *mentalism*, see Conee and Feldman (2004). However, I will not be concerned with *mentalism* here. Rather, following Pritchard, I will consider internalism as traditionally understood, namely, as *accessibilism*.

[3]For a discussion on the basis problem see, for example, Ranalli (2014) and Ghijsen (2015). For a discussion on the distinguishability problem see Dennis (2014) and Ranalli (2014). For a recent discussion on whether Pritchard's Disjunctivism is able to resist the Sceptical Paradox see Ashton (2015) and Zalabardo (2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

one's mental states.[4] Take Content Externalism to be, roughly put, the thesis that the content of one's mental states is determined by factors in the external environment. Imagine now that one has a "water thought", e.g., the thought that the water is wet. Privileged Access entails that one can know by reflection that one has a water thought. Content Externalism entails that if one has a water thought then one has interacted with H_2O. Assuming one can know by reflection that Content Externalism is true, and assuming a closure principle for reflective knowledge, the McKinsey paradox aims to show that one can know by reflection a contingent fact about the environment, e.g., one can know by reflection that one has interacted with H_2O, yet this is absurd.[5, 6]

By requiring the rational support to be both factive and reflectively accessible, and assuming the plausible thesis that it is possible to know by reflection alone that *seeing that* p entails p, Epistemological Disjunctivism (ED) seems to immediately face a problem analogous to the one faced by Content Externalism.[7] Pritchard's formulation of this so-called Access Problem goes as follows:

The Access Problem[8]

(AP1) S can know by reflection alone that her reason for believing the specific empirical proposition p is the factive reason R.

(AP2) S can know by reflection alone that R entails p.

So,

(APC) S can know by reflection alone the specific empirical proposition p. (Pritchard 2012: 46)

The first premise AP1 is a direct consequence of Pritchard's ED. In particular, what matters for the foregoing argument to go through is the thesis, entailed by ED, that

[4]It is worth pointing out that Michael McKinsey does not talk about *reflective* knowledge: he talks about a priori knowledge of one's mental content. However, the notion of a priori knowledge in McKinsey's papers (and, more in general, in the post-McKinsey literature) is thought of as including *introspection* (contrary to what happens in the a priori/a posteriori debate, where introspective knowledge is generally considered to be empirical knowledge). For homogeneity reasons, I will here talk about reflective knowledge.

[5]See Putnam (1975), McKinsey (1991, 2002, 2007), Boghossian (1998), and Kallestrup (2010). For a collection of articles on the McKinsey problem for Content and Semantic Externalism see Nuccetelli (2003).

[6]Although most philosophers have taken this consequence to be plainly unacceptable, Sarah Sawyer resists the McKinsey paradox by biting the bullet: Content Externalism and Privileged Access Thesis jointly lead to the conclusion that we can know by reflection alone specific empirical propositions. However, she argues, this is not an unacceptable result. See Sawyer (1998).

[7]Note that a similar problem might arise for other varieties of evidential externalism, e.g., for Williamson's E=K. See for instance Silins (2005) and Littlejohn (2011). However, in Fratantonio (2018) I argue that the Access Problem does not represent a threat to E=K. See also Fratantonio and McGlynn (2018: 86–90). For a critical overview on the main arguments and motivations behind evidential Internalism-evidential externalism see Fratantonio (Forthcoming).

[8]In evaluating the McKinsey-style challenge for (ED), Pritchard considers four different formulations of the Access Problem. This first one is the main formulation he considers, the one around which Pritchard focuses his discussion on the Access Problem. As will be clear later, this formulation of the Access Problem argument is one that assumes that the agent is in a paradigmatically good case of perceptual knowledge. See Pritchard (2012: 29–30). Following Pritchard, I will mainly focus on this formulation of the Access Problem. However, to understand better Pritchard's response to the Access Problem, I will briefly consider all formulations of the argument.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a subject S can know by reflection alone that R, where S's rational support R is S's *seeing that*. The second premise AP2 is a thesis about S's knowledge of the truth-entailing nature of R. This second premise is usually taken to be plausible, for it merely assumes that S can know by reflection alone that *seeing that* p entails p. However, the conclusion, which is the result of S making a competent deduction, looks (allegedly) unacceptable. Before evaluating Pritchard's response to the Access Problem, let me highlight the crucial role that a Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge plays in the foregoing argument. I take the Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge to be the following CRK:

> (CRK): If one knows by reflection alone that p, and one knows by reflection alone that p entails q, and one competently deduces q from p while retaining her knowledge that p, then one knows by reflection alone that q.[9, 10]

The foregoing formulation of closure is what underpins the argument driving the Access Problem. That is, the argument's validity crucially depends on the truth of CRK. We can thus briefly summarise the Access Problem as follows: given that it is possible to know by reflection alone that R (AP1), and that it is possible to know by reflection alone that R entails p (AP2) then, if CRK is true, it follows the disastrous conclusion that it is possible to know by reflection alone that p. If Pritchard wants to save ED he thus needs to block the argument from AP1 to APC.

2. Pritchard's response to the Access Problem

As described above, what distinguishes Epistemological Disjunctivism is the conjunction of the following two constraints:

(a.) The possibility of having purely reflective access to one's rational support R.
(b.) The truth-entailing nature of one's rational support R.

These two constraints underpin AP1 and AP2 respectively. It is thus the conjunction of (a.) and (b.) that, together with CRK, gives rise to the Access Problem. Fortunately, Pritchard seems to have a solution to this problem. That is, he argues that:

> the access problem does not represent a challenge to [epistemological disjunctivism], because the conclusion of the above argument … fails to follow from the premises, contrary to first appearances. (Pritchard 2012: 47)

Insofar as Pritchard is not willing to reject either (a.) or (b.), his line of response can be defined as *compatibilist*.[11] That is, he maintains that the accessibility thesis (a.) and factivity of one's rational support (b.) are jointly compatible. Instead, given the argument from AP1 to APC, he rejects the conclusion APC: given the possibility of reflective knowledge of one's rational support, and given factivity of one's rational support (as entailed by ED), it does not follow that one can have reflective knowledge of the

[9]This formulation of closure principle is built upon the one offered in Williamson (2000) and Hawthorne (2005).

[10]Insofar as it's plausible to assume that deductive reasoning is a way of coming to know something by reflection, the consequent of the conditional CRK might look redundant. However, for the sake of clarity I will use Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge as stated in CRK.

[11]The terminology is here borrowed from Jessica Brown who, in her discussion on the McKinsey Paradox for Content Externalism, takes a *compatibilist* response to the McKinsey Paradox to be one claiming that Content Externalism and Privileged Access are jointly compatible. See Brown (1995, 2004).

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

empirical proposition p, thereby leaving ED untouched. But what is Pritchard's motivation for rejecting the entailment from AP1 and AP2 to APC?

To see why, according to Pritchard, the conclusion APC does not follow from the premises, Pritchard invites us to unpack premise AP1 and to reformulate the Access Problem as follows:

Access Problem'

(AP1)' S can know by reflection alone that her reason for believing the specific empirical proposition p is the factive reason that she *sees that* p.

(AP2)' S can know by reflection alone that if she sees that p, then p.

So,

(APC)' S can know by reflection alone the specific empirical proposition p.[12] (Pritchard 2012: 47)

According to Pritchard, once we specify that one's rational support is the *empirical reason* that one *sees that* p, we can appreciate that, although one can have purely reflective knowledge of one's rational support R, the conclusion APC' doesn't seem to follow, for it looks like S does not derive that p by *reflection alone*.

Perhaps one can reformulate the argument in a way that resist Pritchard's response here. In particular, one could appeal to a feature of Pritchard's own view, namely, the fact that *seeing that* p is a way of knowing that p only in paradigmatically good cases. This means that, according to Pritchard, one can *see that* p without knowing or even believing that p (e.g., in cases in which one has a misleading defeater) (Pritchard 2012: 25–34). The proponent of the Access Problem could thus reformulate the first premise of the argument, such that S has purely reflective access to her empirical rational support, but S does not believe that p:

Access Problem"

(AP1") S can know by reflection alone that she is in possession of the factive reason R for believing the specific empirical proposition *p* (although she does not believe that p on any empirical basis).

(AP2") S can know by reflection alone that R entails p.

So,

(APC") S can know by reflection alone the specific empirical proposition *p*. (Pritchard 2012: 49)

Reformulating the argument with AP1" is supposed to prevent Pritchard from claiming that, given S already knows empirically that p in AP1", the conclusion does not follow from the premises. After all, it is explicit in AP1" that S doesn't even believe that p! Pritchard anticipates this objection but he does not think it represents a threat to

[12]Note that this formulation of the Access Problem is still assuming that S is in a paradigmatically good case.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ED. For note that, on his view, it is only in paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge that one can have purely reflective access to one's factive rational support. According to Pritchard, one's *seeing that* p is not reflectively accessible in cases that are epistemologically sub-optimal, such as cases in which one is in epistemically favourable circumstances but one fails to believe (and thus know) that p (e.g., because in possession of misleading defeaters) (Pritchard 2012: 51). If ED is true, the first premise AP1" is just plainly false.

One might wonder why we should not grant some sort of reflective access in sub-optimal cases as well. However, I will not be concerned with this issue here. For the sake of the paper, I will assume, with Pritchard, that we can have purely reflective knowledge of our rational support in paradigmatic cases of reflective knowledge only.[13] Once we accept this restriction, it seems Pritchard can say that the conclusion of the Access Problem does not follow from the premises, and this is because

> S's route to her acquisition of this (putatively) exclusively reflective knowledge of the target proposition *essentially depends* on the fact that she has empirical reason to believe this proposition. (Pritchard 2012: 47, italics added)

This, in a nutshell, explains why S's knowledge in APC fails to constitute a genuine instance of 'exclusively reflective knowledge'. More precisely, what Pritchard is claiming in the foregoing quotation is that, in order for one's instance of propositional knowledge to be in the market for 'purely reflective knowledge', it cannot be *essentially dependent* on one's empirical reasons. But here's the problem: it's far from clear what it means for one's knowledge (and for one's propositional attitude more in general) to *essentially depend* on one's empirical reasons, and, unfortunately, Pritchard does not explicitly spell out which notion of dependency is in play here. Crucially, in order to assess whether Pritchard's response to the Access Problem is as effective as he hopes it to be, we need to have a better grasp of what it means to have purely reflective access. That is, we need an account of what it takes for an instance of knowledge to be *essentially dependent* on any empirical reasons one might have. More precisely, for Pritchard's response to be successful, we need a notion of dependency that meets the following two desiderata:

(i) it predicts that one can have purely reflective knowledge of one's empirical rational support (R);
(ii) it predicts that one cannot have purely reflective knowledge of what the rational support entails (P).

In what follows, I will consider three accounts of '*essential dependency*', each of which underpins three different ways of understanding "purely reflective access": a metaphysical understanding, a folk understanding (Section 3), and an epistemic understanding (Section 4). While I will consider and develop all three possible readings, I will devote most of my attention to the epistemic understanding because, as I will point out later, I take this to be the most charitable interpretation of Pritchard's words. However, I will argue that none of these interpretations is able to satisfyingly meet both the above-mentioned desiderata.

Before analysing these different accounts of *essential dependency*, I want to make two important methodological remarks. First, as mentioned before, part of the aim of this

[13]In fact, as it will be clear later, none of my arguments against Pritchard's response depends on this feature of ED. From now on, I will thus assume that S is in a paradigmatic good case.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

paper is to offer different interpretations of what it means for S to have "purely reflective knowledge". Therefore, I will take the notion of "purely reflective knowledge" to work as a placeholder standing for something that can be cashed out in different ways.[14] Second, in this paper I am going to assume that, if purely reflective knowledge is indeed sometimes possible, then anything that is deduced from this original instance of reflective knowledge (and from premises that are known purely reflectively) will remain reflective knowledge. After all, as I have pointed out before, reflective knowledge is closed under competent deduction. This amounts to saying that deduction does not add any empirical element into one's knowledge. This is highly uncontroversial. However, it means that for *any* of the interpretations of "purely reflective knowledge" I offer, "purely reflective knowledge" will be preserved by competent deductive inference. A straightforward and important consequence of assuming that deductive inference does not introduce any empirical element to one's original reflective knowledge is that we cannot legitimately accommodate (i) and (ii) by appealing to two different interpretations of "purely reflective knowledge". For the only way in which one can do so would be by saying that there is at least one interpretation of "purely reflective knowledge" such that deduction-based knowledge (and deductive inference in general) does not classify as purely reflective knowledge (or purely reflective inference) under that interpretation.

3. On the metaphysical and folk interpretation of essential dependency

As mentioned in the previous section, Pritchard's way of dealing with the Access Problem argument is to reject its conclusion. Although we can have reflective knowledge of our rational support R (i.e., our *seeing that*), we do not have reflective knowledge of what R entails (i.e., p). This is because, Pritchard says, our knowledge of p *essentially depends* on our having empirical reason R in the first place, and reflective knowledge is knowledge that does not essentially depend on empirical reasons. But what does it mean for a doxastic attitude to *essentially depend* on empirical reasons? The first interpretation I consider here is what I call the *metaphysical* notion of dependency:

> (Metaphysical Dependency): S's believing that *p* metaphysically depends on x for a subject S iff, S wouldn't believe that p if x had not been the case.

Assume Metaphysical Dependency is the correct way of understanding the notion of 'essential dependency'. We can then say that S's knowledge that p is reflective knowledge only if, S's knowledge that p does not metaphysically depend on S's empirical support, e.g., S's *seeing that*. That is, S's knowledge that p is reflective knowledge only if, it is not the case that: if S hadn't had the "seeing" in the first place, S wouldn't believe that p.

Can we rely on this metaphysical understanding of the notion of dependency in order to satisfyingly resist the Access Problem? If S knows that p in virtue of seeing that p, then it's plausible to say that S's knowledge that p *metaphysically depends* (in the sense expressed by Metaphysical Dependency) on S's empirical support. For remember that Pritchard is concerned with paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge.[15] Therefore, if S knows that p by seeing that p, then S wouldn't have believed that p if S hadn't seen that p. Thus, it looks like Metaphysical Dependency rightly

[14] As will be clear in the next section, some ways of spelling out this notion are less plausible than others.

[15] It is important to stress that Pritchard is concerned with paradigmatic cases of perceptual visual knowledge because one might be tempted to say that, if Metaphysical Dependency is the right interpretation of the notion of essential dependency in play, then S knows that p by reflection. After all, one might say, even if S hadn't seen that p, one might come to know that p in a different way, such as, by testimony. Appealing to paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge stops this move.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

predicts that one does not have reflective knowledge of the empirical proposition p. However, if Metaphysical Dependency is the notion of essential dependency that we should consider, then, how can we account for the fact that one has purely reflective knowledge of one's rational support in paradigmatic good cases? If what Pritchard has in mind is a notion of "purely reflective knowledge" that should be understood in the light of this metaphysical interpretation of the notion of *essential dependency*, then it looks like we can't allow for one to have reflective knowledge of one's rational support either. In fact, one's knowledge of one's *seeing that* p clearly metaphysically depends (in the sense expressed in Metaphysical Dependency) on S's empirical *seeing* in the first place. This first metaphysical interpretation of essential dependency is thus not a promising one, for it fails to meet one of the desiderata that a satisfying interpretation of essential dependency should have: although it successfully denies reflective knowledge of the empirical proposition one's rational support entails, it fails to allow for reflective knowledge of one's rational support. Furthermore, note that this would be a particularly disastrous conclusion for Pritchard. For remember that on his definition of Epistemological Disjunctivism, those paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge are cases of perceptual knowledge *in virtue* of the fact that one has reflectively accessible (factive) rational support. Embracing Epistemological Disjunctivism together with a metaphysical account of reflective access would thus entail the sceptical conclusion that paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge are not possible. We can thus safely say that this metaphysical interpretation of "essential dependency" surely cannot be the notion Pritchard has in mind when talking about "purely reflective knowledge".

Let's now move onto the second interpretation of essential dependency, namely, what I call the *folk interpretation*. Remember, once again, that, on Pritchard's view, one's knowledge can be classified as purely reflective knowledge iff it does not *essentially depend* on one's empirical reasons. However, a defender of Epistemological Disjunctivism might claim that we should weaken the foregoing notions of "essential dependency" and "reflective access". That is, one might argue that we should understand "reflective access" as referring to a very cheap and undemanding notion, one that is compatible with the layman's everyday usage of "knowing something by reflection alone and without further empirical enquiry".[16] The idea here is that, even if one had to *see that* p before coming to know that one sees that p, one can acquire this knowledge merely by 'reflecting' on one's situation and without having to carry any further empirical check. Contrary to the metaphysical interpretation of reflective knowledge, appealing to this folk interpretation allows for purely reflective knowledge of one's rational support. At the same time, however, it entails that one can have purely reflective knowledge of the target empirical proposition entailed by one's rational support. After all, one can just "reflect" on what seeing that p entails without having to conduct an empirical check. While this folk interpretation meets the first desideratum, it does not seem to accommodate the second one. This seems problematic for Pritchard, given that he takes one advantage of his view to be that it is a non-revisionary thesis, one that leaves our pre-theoretical intuitions untouched. Accepting the conclusion APC would thus fail to account for the general intuition that it is in fact absurd to have "reflective knowledge" of specific empirical propositions.

Perhaps Pritchard could thus bite the bullet here, thereby granting the possibility of "reflective knowledge" of a specific empirical proposition p. At the same time, he could say that, once we are not taking "reflective knowledge" to be any technical notion, this would not be a disastrous conclusion after all. In fact, Pritchard could rightly point out that, given this weakened notion of essential dependency, accepting that one can have

[16]Greco (2014) seems to have something like this in mind when talking about reflective knowledge.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

"purely reflective knowledge" that p does not even constitute a real biting the bullet strategy. For note that the Access Problem does not concern the possibility of extrapolating by reflection the consequences of what one already knows empirically, as there is nothing problematic about that. Rather, it concerns the possibility of having *purely* reflective knowledge of an empirical proposition. And yet, on this folk interpretation, one's "purely reflective knowledge" that p in APC would be "purely reflective knowledge" only in name.[17]

Despite its *prima facie* plausibility, I am afraid this strategy is also problematic, for it clashes with Pritchard's overall project of offering Epistemological Disjunctivism as the *holy grail* of epistemology, namely, as a view that combines the core commitments of both traditional internalism and externalism, thereby shedding light on a new logical possibility. First, note that if we say that, in APC, one has purely reflective knowledge that p in the "folk sense" (i.e., in the sense of having "knowledge without further empirical enquiry"), we will have to insist that one's rational support in AP1 is also reflectively accessible in the same "folk sense". Crucially, a weak interpretation of "reflective knowledge", such as the one offered by the *folk interpretation*, would fail to capture the internalist conception of "access" that, by contrast, has been traditionally understood in relation to the technical notions of *cognitive accessibility* and *doxastic responsibility*. More precisely, what lies behind Pritchard's accessibility requirement seems to be an internalist conception of rationality, one on which one's rational support has to be unproblematically and immediately given to one.[18] Furthermore, embracing a more conservative account of "purely reflective knowledge" in AP1 (in a way that is in line with access internalism), while saying that we should read "purely reflective knowledge" in APC along this more liberal folk interpretation (in a way that makes the conclusion APC unproblematic) is also not an option available to the defender of Epistemological Disjunctivism. For, as I pointed out in the previous Section, we cannot accommodate desirata (i) and (ii) by appealing to two different notions of "purely reflective access".[19]

Finally, if the accessibility requirement underpinning Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism has to be understood along this folk interpretation, then the worry is that Pritchard fails to distinguish his view from more radical and traditional externalist theories of rational support.[20] That is, if all Epistemological Dijsunctivism entails is that, after seeing that p, we can know our rational support (seeing that) by reflecting on our epistemic situation and without conducting any further empirical inquiry, then this seems to be something that almost everyone would be willing to accept. After all, everyone – externalist included – would grant that *in paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge* we can have knowledge of what our rational support is. For instance, Williamson, who notoriously rejects access internalism, would still acknowledge that in favourable cases we are in the position to know what our evidence is (Williamson 2000: 15).

[17]Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing this issue.

[18]To put it in Pritchard's words: "[i]f rational support were not so accessible – if in particular it was opaque to one that one's beliefs enjoyed this rational support – then it would be hard to see why it would count as rationally supporting your belief that p" (Pritchard 2012: 14).

[19]The way in which appealing to two conceptions of reflective knowledge would allegedly accommodate desiderata (i) and (ii) is that one could say that, although one has purely reflective knowledge in a strong sense in AP1 (thereby meeting (i)), one does not have purely reflective knowledge in this strong sense in APC (thereby meeting (ii)). For in APC one has reflective knowledge only in this weak "folk" sense. As I have stressed already, this is not a legitimate move. In fact, if we opted for a stricter version of "purely reflective knowledge" in AP1 and for this weaker "folk" interpretation of purely reflective knowledge in APC, then we will have to blame deductive reasoning as that which is responsible for converting this strong reflective knowledge in AP1 into more "empirically contaminated" knowledge in APC.

[20]I take rational support here to indicate both the notions of evidence and epistemic justification.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Similarly, as John Greco has pointed out, if this is the conception of "purely reflective knowledge" Pritchard has in mind, then, even paradigmatic externalist theories, such as reliabilism, would grant that in paradigmatic cases of perceptual knowledge we know "purely by reflection" that our (reliable) rational support is our *seeing that* something is the case (Greco 2014: 120).

4. On the epistemic interpretation of essential dependency

In the previous section, I have considered two interpretations of the notion of essential dependency, namely, a metaphysical interpretation and a folk interpretation. I have shown that none of them is actually satisfying. The former is too restrictive and it predicts that one can have reflective knowledge of neither one's rational support R nor what R entails. The latter seems too liberal, for it predicts that one can have reflective knowledge of both one's rational support R as well as the empirical proposition P one's rational support R entails. In the remainder of this paper, I will focus on what I call the *epistemic interpretation* of the notion of essential dependency. I take this to be the most charitable interpretation of Pritchard's words. Crucially, I will argue that, despite being more promising than the metaphysical and folk interpretations, the epistemic interpretation is nonetheless highly problematic. I will thus conclude that, as things stand, there's no plausible account of essential dependency (and thus of Reflective Access) that would enable the defender of Epistemological Disjunctivism to resist the Access Problem.

I believe that Pritchard's notion of dependency is to be understood in the light of what constitutes his main target of interest, namely, the nature of perceptual knowledge and, most of all, the nature of a (rational) epistemic basis, together with his interest in doxastic justification.[21] Bearing this in mind, I will here understand the notion of epistemic dependency as the following conditional:

> (Epistemic Dependency): S's believing that *p* epistemically depends on *x* for a subject S iff, S's believing that *p* is based on *x*.[22,23]

If we take Epistemic Dependency to be the notion of dependency Pritchard has in mind, then the fact that S's knowledge that p *essentially depends* on S's having the empirical reason that she *sees that* p is to be understood as the fact that the (rational) *reason why* S is believing that p (and, granted that S is in a paradigmatic good case,

[21]His being concerned with what constitutes the epistemic basis for perceptual knowledge becomes clear in his text, especially in the following two passages:

> [W]hat is key is that one is no longer basing one's belief on the empirical epistemic support once the competent proof has been conducted. Indeed, it is only if this is so that the resultant knowledge is properly classed as exclusively reflective. (Pritchard 2012: 48)
>
> the challenge we are raising for the access problem explicitly concerns a case where the agent continues to *base* her belief on the prior empirical epistemic support that she has [i.e., the fact that she *sees that* p]. (Pritchard 2012: 48)

[22]I take the epistemic basis in Epistemic Dependency to be the notion of epistemic basis traditionally involved in the notion of *doxastic justification*. This is not an uncontroversial topic. However, an analysis of the notion of epistemic basis would be beyond the scope of this paper. For the purpose of this paper, it is sufficient to cash out the notion of "epistemic basis" in terms of S's *reasons* on the basis of which S believes a target proposition.

[23]Note that this is not related to what Pritchard has in mind when talking about "epistemic dependence" (Pritchard 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

S knows that p) is that she *sees that* p.[24] In other words, S's knowledge that p *epistemically* depends on S's seeing that p, insofar as S is basing her belief that p on the fact that she *sees that* p. We can recapitulate things as follows: Pritchard has to resist the argument from AP1 to APC in order to save his ED. Given he is committed to both premises AP1 and AP2, he rejects the conclusion APC. What is Pritchard's motivation for rejecting APC? The answer seems to be that, while S's knowledge that R is reflective, S's knowledge that p is not reflective after all, rather it is an instance of empirical knowledge, given that S's reason for believing that p is primarily S's *seeing that* p. That is, S's knowledge that p is mainly *based* on S's *seeing* that p.

4.1 Why the epistemic interpretation is problematic

In the previous section, I reconstructed Pritchard's response to the Access Problem in the light of an epistemic interpretation of the notion of dependency involved. *Prima facie*, it looks like this epistemic interpretation is able to meet the above-mentioned two desiderata. Crucially, at closer inspection, we can see that, even in the light of this more promising notion of 'essential dependency', Pritchard's response is problematic. In particular, I now argue that relying on this epistemic interpretation enables Pritchard to successfully resist the Access Problem only at the high cost of rejecting a plausible Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge. Let's see why.

As I have mentioned in Section 2.1 of this paper, Pritchard's response to the Access Problem can be thought of as a compatibilist one, insofar as he argues that factivity of rational support and privileged access are jointly compatible (as follows from ED). If Pritchard wants to save ED, he needs to block the argument from AP1 and AP2 to APC. He cannot reject AP1 without giving up his view, for, as mentioned above, AP1 directly follows from ED. He cannot reject AP2 without embracing very counter-intuitive ideas, for, as mentioned above, AP2 is overwhelmingly plausible. Rejecting the conclusion APC, thereby questioning the argument's validity, seems thus to be the only way to go. As we have seen, the way Pritchard argues for the rejection of APC is by pointing out that S's knowledge that p *essentially depends* on S's having factive reason R (i.e., on S's *seeing that* p). On Pritchard's view, even if we grant the possibility of reflective knowledge of R and reflective knowledge of the truth-entailing nature of R, the allegedly disastrous conclusion APC does not follow, for S *already* knows the specific empirical proposition p on the basis of her factive rational support R. The most S can come to know by reflection alone is something about her rational support, and not the specific empirical proposition p (Pritchard 2012: 51). As Pritchard maintains when reformulating the Access Problem, what follows from AP1 and AP2 is, at best, the following modified conclusion (MAPC):

> (MAPC) […] S can know by reflection alone that her reason for believing the specific empirical proposition p is the factive empirical reason R that entails P. (Pritchard 2012: 51)

But, is MAPC really the strongest claim you can get from AP1, AP2 and CRK, as presented in the Access Problem? I here argue that it is not.

In order to see clearly what is in play in Pritchard's response, and why MAPC is not the strongest claim we can get from AP1 and AP2, let us reformulate Pritchard's modified argument, namely, one which has AP1 and AP2 as its premises, and MAPC as its

[24] I am here assuming that S's belief that p is based on r iff r is S's reason for believing that p. Note that this biconditional is not uncontroversial. In particular one could question the right to left side of the biconditional. However, this won't matter for the purpose of the paper.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

conclusion. Let RK_s be "S knows by reflection alone that"; let r_s be "S has factive rational support R" and let p be an empirical proposition:

(AP1*) RK_s [r_s]

(AP2*) RK_s [$r_s \supset p$]

(MAPC) RK_s [$r_s \& (r_s \supset p)$]

The above formulation of the argument shows that the conclusion MAPC results from the conjunction of one's reflective knowledge of one's having rational support R (AP1) with one's knowledge of the truth-entailing nature of one's rational support R (AP2). What Pritchard needs to assume in order to derive the conclusion MAPC from the premises is nothing as strong as a closure principle CRK, but rather a mere Principle of Agglomeration.[25] Crucially, if this is correct, Pritchard's reformulated version of the argument fails to capture the real worry addressed by the original Access Problem.[26] The original Access Problem, as Pritchard himself presents it, is one which involves the possibility of knowing by reflection alone the conceptual implications that follow from one's previous reflective knowledge, assumed that reflective knowledge is closed under known entailment. If Pritchard wants to save his ED from the Access Problem, he should thus consider the original formulation of the Access Problem in the first place, one which rests on the above-mentioned closure principle CRK (and not one involving the Principle of Agglomeration). Crucially, once the Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge is back on the table, it is easy to see that MAPC is no longer the strongest claim we can get from the premises AP1 and AP2. In fact, if we reformulate the argument involving a Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge (CRK), we can derive the stronger conclusion APC, i.e., that it is possible to have reflective knowledge of a specific empirical proposition p:

(AP1*) KR_s [r_s]

(AP2*) KR_s [$r_s \supset p$]

(APC*) KR_s [p][27]

Remember that what Pritchard needs is an account of 'essential dependency' (and thus of 'reflective knowledge') that meets the following two desiderata:

[25]I take a general Principle of Agglomeration for reflective knowledge to be the following conditional: (KR_s[p] & KR_s [q]) ⊃ KR_s [p&q].

[26]In fact, it would also fail to capture McKinsey's original worry. When describing the paradox, what McKinsey has in mind is a *conceptual* notion of dependency, and the problem is one involving a closure principle for knowledge. He writes:

> [I]f you could know a priori that you are in a given mental state, and your being in that state conceptually or logically implies the existence of external objects, then you could know a priori that the external world exists. (McKinsey 1991: 16)

[27]It is worth noting that a single premise closure is actually enough to take us from (MAPC) to the undesirable consequence (APC*).

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

(i) it predicts that one has purely reflective knowledge of one's rational support (*seeing* that).
(ii) it predicts that one does not have purely reflective knowledge of what the rational support entails (P).

What I have argued in this section is that, although the epistemic interpretation of the notion of essential dependency seems more promising than the metaphysical and the folk interpretation, merely appealing to this epistemic notion of essential dependency doesn't enable us to *satisfyingly* meet the above-mentioned desiderata. Although understanding reflective knowledge in terms of Epistemic Dependency allows us to account for purely reflective knowledge of one's rational support, it is not able to explain why one cannot gain purely reflective knowledge of what the rational support entails. If the notion of reflective access underpinning Epistemological Disjunctivism is to be cashed out in terms of 'epistemic dependency', then Pritchard cannot resist the conclusion of the Access Problem, unless he is willing to reject a plausible Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge. As I have shown, by questioning the argument's validity, Pritchard has to account for the fact that the argument is valid iff the Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge is true. To sum up: with an epistemic notion of essential dependency in place, the only way to resist the Access Problem seems thus to reject the plausible Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge.

4.2 Restricting closure

Defenders of Pritchard's version of ED could reply by biting the bullet: they could be willing to reject both APC as well as CRK. Crucially, this does not seem to be what Pritchard has in mind. If Pritchard were really committed to rejection of the Closure Principle, then it is not clear why he never explicitly blames closure as being what generates this *prima facie* McKinsey-style problem.[28] As things stand, it seems Pritchard's disjunctivism is in trouble. Perhaps, however, we can think of a possible solution.

One possible strategy could be to argue for the following restricted version of closure (CRK'):

> (CRK') If one knows by reflection alone that p, and one competently deduces q from p while retaining one's knowledge by reflection that p, thereby coming to believe that q *for the first time* (on a reflective basis, or on any other basis), then one knows by reflection alone that q.[29]

Pritchard could argue that the only closure principle we should consider seriously is the restricted CRK'. The advantage of arguing for CRK' is straightforward: by rejecting CRK while appealing to CRK' Pritchard could provide an explanation of why APC fails to follow from the premises, while anyway retaining a version of closure. By posing an extra condition (i.e., one deductively comes to believe that q *for the first* time), the weaker CRK' is entailed by CRK, thereby allowing Pritchard to reject the latter without

[28]In his (2012: 51) Pritchard writes: "[T]he reasoning at issue in the access problem is revealed to be fallacious, in that for the premises to be true it simply cannot be the case that S's knowledge of the target proposition is exclusively reflective". One might read this passage as showing Pritchard's commitment to rejecting closure, yet he never explicitly commits himself to such a rejection. On the contrary, although Pritchard never mentions a Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge in his discussion of the access problem, he does explicitly consider a very similar variety of closure principle for knowledge in other sections of his book. See Pritchard (2012: 68).

[29]Remember that I am still assuming a notion of reflective knowledge as understood in Section 4, namely, as knowledge that does not *epistemically* depend on empirical reasons.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

rejecting the former version of closure. Crucially, while CRK is needed in order for the Access Problem argument to go through, CRK' does not give rise to the same problem. Given that one knows by reflection alone that one has R, and that R entails p, it is easy for one to bring about a competent deduction, thereby coming to know by reflection that p. However, this piece of deductive knowledge is merely a second way in which one knows that p. That is, one does not know that p on a reflective basis *for the first time*, for one first comes to know that p empirically by means of *seeing that* p. It follows that from AP1, AP2 and a weaker closure CRK', the conclusion APC does not follow. To recapitulate: Pritchard resists the Access Problem argument by rejecting its conclusion, namely, by questioning its validity. Since, as I have pointed out above, the validity of the argument driving the Access Problem depends on the acceptance of CRK, Pritchard is also forced to reject CRK. At the same time, there is another Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge, namely CRK', that Pritchard can easily embrace without being forced to accept the Access Problem as a real challenge for ED.

Crucially, there are at least two problems with this restricted Closure Principle. First, it is far from obvious why we should embrace this restricted version of the Closure Principle and reject the unrestricted one. In order to see why I take CRK' to be left unmotivated, let us imagine a paradigmatic case of perceptual knowledge. Let us suppose that S sees that q, thereby coming to know that q at time t1. Let us now suppose that, at a later time t2, S also gets testimony knowledge that p, and that p entails q. It seems intuitive to say that, given a plausible Closure Principle for Testimonial Knowledge, S also knows that q by testimony. Let us now consider the following restricted version of a Closure Principle for Testimonial Knowledge:

> (CTK') If one knows by testimony that p, and one knows by testimony that p entails q, and one competently deduces q from p while retaining her knowledge that p, thereby coming to believe that q *for the first time* (on a testimony basis, or on any other basis), then one knows by testimony that q.

If we were to embrace CTK' (while rejecting an unrestricted Closure Principle for Testimonial Knowledge), nothing will guarantee that the conclusion that [S has testimonial knowledge that q at time t2] is true, insofar as S does not come to have testimonial knowledge that q *for the first time* (in fact, she *already* knew that q at t1). This, however, seems counterintuitive, for it is plausible to say that S can know that q both perceptually and, at a later time, by testimony. We probably wouldn't be willing to reject an unrestricted Closure Principle for Testimonial Knowledge in favour of the restricted (CTK'): (CTK') without (CTK) does not look appealing. But then, why should we reject unrestricted Closure for *Reflective* Knowledge, while embracing unrestricted Closure for *Testimonial* Knowledge? The point I want to make is that, we should expect any defender of a restricted closure principle, such as CRK', to have a general strong motivation for favouring restricted closure principles over unrestricted ones. Crucially, it is not clear what reasons could be behind restricted closure principle. Besides avoiding the foregoing problem, what motivations underpin CRK' is left unclear, thereby making this restriction looking like an *ad hoc* move.

Second, CRK' is not applicable to cases in which one knows the target proposition in two ways.[30] Consider the following scenario. John is a first-year student in math. One day John goes to the lecture and his professor, Jane, mentions that there are infinitely

[30]In fact, this second point is enough to show the implausibility of a restricted Closure Principle even to those who might want to reject my first point by stressing that it's not clear whether testimony knowledge is closed under competent deduction.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

many prime numbers. John thus comes to know this proposition by testimony. Suppose that at some later time, John is actually able to prove that there are infinitely many prime numbers. He reasons and he deductively proves that proposition. Thus, John now knows the same proposition by reflection and deductive reasoning. Crucially, although John's knowledge is the result of deductive reasoning, he does not come to know that proposition *for the first time*, as required by CRK'. It follows that, if CRK' is the relevant variety of Closure Principle (and not CRK), then nothing will guarantee that John comes to know by reflection that there are infinitely many prime numbers. But this is highly counterintuitive.[31] Rejecting CRK, yet holding CRK', does not guarantee that one can know something in more than one way. Once again, this restricted closure together with the negation of an unrestricted Closure Principle does not look appealing.

One might rightly point out that there is a crucial asymmetry between the scenario involving John and Jane, and the original scenario involved in the formulation of the Access Problem. While in the John and Jane scenario we have a combination of testimony and reflective knowledge, in the original scenario we have a combination of perceptual and reflective knowledge. It can then be argued that the way in which reflective knowledge depends on experience in the first scenario is not the same way in which reflective knowledge depends on testimony knowledge in the John and Jane scenario. In fact, while in the Access Problem S could have not had reflective knowledge that p without having had experience that p in the first place, the same is not true in the second scenario: John could have had gained reflective knowledge that there are infinitely many prime numbers even without having had testimony knowledge of that proposition. However, what my argument aims to show is merely that although CRK', as it stands, is true, it is nevertheless limited in its application and we should thus also embrace CRK.

It is worth noting that Pritchard is well aware of this problem and he explicitly denies the idea that one can never have reflective knowledge of a proposition if one already had empirical knowledge of the proposition. He says:

> Note that the worry being raised here is not that one cannot come to have exclusively reflective knowledge of a proposition in cases where one already has an empirical basis for believing that proposition, since this is clearly false. (Pritchard 2012: 48)

In fact, he claims that the challenge posed by the Access Problem is more specific than that. After considering a case similar to the one I presented here, a case in which a student learns something first empirically, and then by means of a proof, he says:

> Accordingly, it had better not be the case that the difficulty we are raising for the access problem trades on the idea that one cannot come to have exclusively reflective knowledge of a proposition in cases where one already has an empirical basis for believing that proposition. Fortunately for us, it doesn't. For notice that the challenge we are posing for the access problem is in fact far more specific. In the case just described where one moves from having empirical epistemic support to having (overwhelming) reflective epistemic support, and where one comes to know on this latter basis alone, what is key is that one is no longer *basing* one's

[31]Note that we can get the same result when considering any disjunction of a contingent truth with a logical truth, e.g., the proposition that [the sun is shining v (pv¬p)].

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> belief on the empirical epistemic support once the competent proof has been conducted. Indeed, it is only if this is so that the resultant knowledge is properly classed as exclusively reflective. (Pritchard 2012: 48)

Pritchard's point thus seems to be that when S comes to know that p in the conclusion of the Access Problem, S is still basing her belief on her empirical epistemic support once the deductive reasoning has been conducted. That's why S's belief that p in the conclusion cannot be classified as reflective knowledge. Crucially, it's really not clear why he would allow for reflective knowledge in the case of the student, but not in the case described by the Access Problem. What prevents the subject of our Access Problem from believing that p on a *mere* reflective basis, once he came to know that p empirically? In a nutshell, Pritchard owes an explanation as to why the subject S in the Access Problem Argument cannot believe that p while no longer basing her belief that p on her empirical support R.

Before moving on to the next section, I want to make a final remark. The considerations I have drawn so far, and the arguments I have provided, show that if Pritchard wants to save his Epistemological Disjunctivism he has some work to do. But what I have said so far also enables us to make a step forward towards understanding the source of dissatisfaction with Pritchard's response to the Access Problem. That is, the main reason why Pritchard's response is not a satisfying one derives from the fact that the notion of reflective access underpinning ED is unclear. In this paper, I have tried to fill in this gap by providing three ways of interpreting the notion of reflective access. Crucially, I have shown that none of them comes without serious problems. Before concluding the paper, I will consider an alternative diagnosis of Pritchard's response to the Access Problem, one recently put forward by Tim Kraft (2015). I will argue that my diagnosis of what's problematic with Pritchard's response is to be preferred.

5. An alternative diagnosis: Tim Kraft's source/content distinction

As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, not much attention has been devoted to the Access Problem for Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism. In this final section, I consider one of the few papers explicitly addressing this problem, namely, Tim Kraft's recent paper (Kraft 2015), which provides an alternative diagnosis of where Pritchard's response to the Access Problem goes wrong. I argue that the source/content distinction underpinning his diagnosis leads to undesirable results.

Kraft's starting point in critically evaluating Pritchard's response is the same as mine. He quotes the relevant passage where Pritchard explicitly states that, contrary to first appearances, the conclusion of the argument fails to follow from the premises (Kraft 2015: 318 [quoting Pritchard]). He then acknowledges that, by rejecting the entailment from the premises to the conclusion, Pritchard is rejecting a plausible Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge. In fact, he takes rejection of closure to be the only palatable option available to the disjunctivist. He writes:

> [t]his leaves epistemological disjunctivism with only one option as a serious contender: the culprit must be closure of reflective knowledge. … [T]his is the option chosen by Pritchard. (Kraft 2015: 317)

However, Kraft points out that Pritchard does not provide an explanation as to why closure for reflective knowledge fails in the Access Problem argument. In his paper, Kraft attempts to fill in this gap. He argues that an explanation can be given by

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

appealing to a distinction between the source and the content of the empirical support. Roughly put, the idea is that there are two ways in which our epistemic support can be empirical:

> According to the source criterion, R is empirical support for believing that P iff the source of one's knowledge of, or of one's access to, R is empirical. … According to the content criterion, R is empirical support for believing that P iff the content of R has the form "I ϕ that p", with "ϕ", being a perceptual or experiential verb. (Kraft 2015: 319)

The advantage of appealing to the source/content distinction is, according to Kraft, twofold. First, the source/content distinction constitutes the conceptual tool the disjunctivist needs in order to account for the possibility of having *reflective* knowledge of an *empirical* support. Second, and more importantly, the source/content distinction would offer an explanation of why reflective knowledge fails to be closed under competent deduction. In order to see how it can do so, let us recall the original Access Problem argument:

(AP1) S can know by reflection alone that R.

(AP2) S can know by reflection alone that R entails p.

So,

(APC) S can know by reflection alone the specific empirical proposition p.

With respect to the first point, Kraft claims that, once the source/content distinction is available, we can classify S's knowledge that R in the premise AP1 as *reflective* knowledge because, despite the fact that R is empirical in the *content* sense, R is nonetheless reflective in the *source* sense. Hence, what Kraft seems to be suggesting is that the nature of the belief's *source* is what determines whether the target instance of knowledge should be classified as reflective rather than empirical.

But how is the source/content distinction supposed to explain why reflective knowledge is not closed under competent deduction? Here's what Kraft says with respect to this second point:

> If one deduces something from something known reflectively, one always ends up with more knowledge, but not necessarily with more *reflective* knowledge. *Reflective access is lost if the first belief is reflective in the source sense but not in the content sense*. (Kraft 2015: 319, italics added)

As I have just explained, Kraft takes S's knowledge in AP1 to be reflective because R in AP1 is reflective in the *source* sense, despite being empirical in the *content* sense. Kraft does not explicitly say anything about S's knowledge in AP2, but in the light of what we have just said, we can plausibly assume he would classify it as an instance of reflective knowledge as well. In fact, the rational support R in AP2 is empirical in the *content* sense, but reflective in the *source* sense. Finally – and here is the crucial bit – Kraft takes S's knowledge in APC to be empirical knowledge because, as he says, "reflective access is lost if the first belief is reflective in the source sense but not in the content sense". Why is this so? Here's Kraft's motivation behind this:

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

> [w]henever I see that P and believe that P (*on that basis*), my belief that P is empirical in the *source* sense – no matter how I can know that I see that P. (Kraft 2015: 319, italics added)

Remember that the *source* of our knowledge that R is what defines whether this target knowledge is empirical or reflective. To say that "my belief that P is empirical in the *source* sense" is thus to say, in Kraft's jargon, that my belief (and hence my knowledge) that P is an instance of empirical knowledge. This is supposed to explain why APC fails to follow from AP1 and AP2. Nevertheless, in the second half of his paper, Kraft argues that the Access Problem for Pritchard's disjunctivism cannot be solved anyway. This is because – Kraft says – the source/content distinction can be employed only if a so-called "independent requirement" is met, but, as it turns out, Pritchard's disjunctivism does not meet such a requirement. Here I shall not discuss whether Pritchard's disjunctivism does or does not meet this "independent requirement". What I will focus on is the plausibility of Kraft's source/content distinction in the first place. In particular, in what follows, I make four brief remarks showing that Kraft's source/content distinction is highly controversial, and that the way this distinction is exploited fails to capture the real reason why the Access Problem originally arises for Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism.

To begin with, note that, while Kraft takes the rejection of closure for reflective knowledge to be the option chosen by Pritchard, this is far from being the case. In fact, as I have stressed in the previous sections, Pritchard never mentions denial of closure as the key to solving the Access Problem. Now, Kraft takes rejection of closure as the only plausible option available to the disjunctivist. Whether this is true or not, it certainly is not something that we should light-heartedly welcome. Surely, it is something Pritchard should not happily welcome. Instead, as I've shown in the first half of this paper, it is the undesirable consequence Pritchard has to pay if he wants to resist the Access Problem for his Epistemological Disjunctivism.

Second, and more importantly, Kraft's source/content distinction, and the way he exploits it in order to explain why APC fails to follow from AP1, is unconvincing. On the one hand, Kraft seems to take the *source* criterion to be what determines the nature of one's knowledge. In fact, remember that it is exactly by appealing to S's knowledge being reflective in the *source* sense that Kraft explains out the possibility of having reflective knowledge in AP1. On the other hand, remember that Kraft takes S's knowledge that p in APC to be not reflective, because S's belief in APC is deduced from her belief that R in AP1, which, despite being reflective in the source sense, is empirical in the content sense. As Kraft puts it: "Reflective access is lost if the first belief is reflective in the source sense but not in the content sense". However, there is no reason why the *content* of S's knowledge in AP1 should have a role in determining the nature of S's belief in APC, namely, of the belief S infers from S's original instance of knowledge in AP1, together with S's reflective knowledge in AP2. That is, there is no reason why the *content* of S's belief in AP1 should have a role in determining the *source* of S's belief in APC. Furthermore, it seems arbitrary to state, as Kraft seems to be doing, that the *content* of S's belief in AP1 is what determines the *source* of S's belief in APC, while leaving the *source* of the belief in AP1 untouched. I take this to be a very puzzling aspect of the way Kraft cashes out the source/content distinction.

Third, and related, if we follow Kraft's suggestion to reject closure, while motivating closure failure by appealing to his source/content distinction, we have a very controversial scenario in which one starts off with reflective knowledge (as in AP1), and ends up with empirical knowledge (as in APC), without doing anything but bringing about a

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

competent deduction. I believe this upshot is even more absurd than the one predicted by the original Access Problem.

Fourth, the source/content distinction, as Kraft uses it, has the undesirable result of classifying paradigmatic instances of reflective knowledge as cases of empirical knowledge. We have seen that, according to Kraft, one can have reflective knowledge of R, insofar as one's knowledge is reflective in the *source* sense. However, if one's knowledge of R is empirical in the *content* sense, then any other knowledge one has after the first belief will lose its reflective status. Or at least, this is what Kraft maintains. Let's assume for a moment that he's right in saying that S's knowledge that R in AP1 can be classified as *reflective*, while S's knowledge that P in APC should be classified as *empirical*. From S's knowledge that P (in APC), S can easily infer, and thereby know, that (P v ¬P). Crucially, if Kraft's diagnosis is correct, then we are forced to classify S's knowledge that (P v ¬P) as empirical. But this is false: everyone would agree in taking S's knowledge that (P v ¬P) to be non-empirical. However, here Kraft might have an explanation accounting for the puzzling phenomenon I have just described, namely the fact that:

> [w]henever I see that P and believe that P (*on that basis*), my belief that P [in APC] is empirical in the source sense – no matter how I can know that I see that P. (Kraft 2015: 319, italics added)

If this were so, perhaps we should just accept this way of exploiting the source/content distinction – *pace* our pre-theoretical intuitions.[32] Note, however, that the way he sets up the problem is mistaken in the first place. Kraft is assuming that S's belief that P in the conclusion APC is based on S's *seeing that* P. Crucially, this is exactly what is under discussion in the Access Problem. As I mentioned in the previous sections, the original problem is one in which S comes to know, by deductive reasoning *alone*, the conceptual implications of S's previous reflective knowledge. For the same reason, to say that it does not matter *how* I can know that I see that P (Kraft 2015: 319), is to simply dismiss the Access Problem as it originally arises for Pritchard's view. Once we take seriously the challenge posed by the Access Problem, we are then back to considering a case in which S comes to believe and know that P in APC by deductive reasoning.

In the light of the above considerations, I take my diagnosis of where Pritchard's argument goes wrong to be preferred over Kraft's one. Besides avoiding the unacceptable results that Kraft's source/content distinction faces, my diagnosis better captures what is at the bottom of the Access Problem. That is, the diagnosis I've offered better highlights that what generates the Access Problem can eventually be traced back to a weakness of Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism: a lack of a clear and plausible account of what he calls "reflective access". Furthermore, while Kraft's diagnosis appeals to a controversial distinction, one that Pritchard does not explicitly embrace, the diagnosis I have provided relies on (and only on) claims that can be derived from Pritchard's own version of Epistemological Disjunctivism.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, I have addressed the Access Problem for Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism (ED). The Access Problem, which mirrors the more notorious

[32]In fact, I suspect that Kraft might just bite the bullet here, given that Kraft himself explicitly considers the possibility of empirical knowledge of a priori truths in a different paper (Kraft 2013). Thanks to an anonymous referee for pointing this out to me.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

McKinsey-paradox, aims to show that the conjunction of accessibilism and factivity of rational support (as entailed by ED) leads to the unacceptable conclusion that one can have reflective knowledge of a specific empirical proposition. In his book, Pritchard offers a way of resisting the problem, namely, he argues that the conclusion fails to follow from the premises: S does not know the specific empirical proposition p by reflection. Pritchard points out that one's instance of knowledge can be classified as 'reflective' only if it does not *essentially* depend on any empirical reasons. Crucially, he does not provide us with a detailed account of what it takes for a doxastic attitude to essentially depend on empirical reasons. In this paper, I have argued that in order to assess the plausibility of Pritchard's response to the Access Problem, we first need to clarify what it takes for someone to have Reflective Access in the first place. In particular, a satisfying account of Reflective Access (and the related notion of essential dependency) has to meet the following desiderata: (i) it has to allow for purely reflective access of one's rational support; (ii) it has to deny purely reflective access to the empirical reason one's rational support entails. I have thus provided three interpretations of the notion of *essential dependency* underlying Reflective Access: a metaphysical, a folk, and an epistemic interpretation. I have shown that none of the accounts is a satisfying one. The metaphysical account fails to meet the first desideratum. The folk interpretation fails to satisfyingly meet the second desideratum. Most of my attention has however been devoted to the epistemic interpretation insofar as I take this to be the most charitable interpretation of Pritchard's own words. Crucially, I have argued that the only way in which appealing to the epistemic interpretation enables us to resist the Access Problem, thereby meeting both the desiderata, comes at the high cost of rejecting a plausible Closure Principle for Reflective Knowledge. Finally, I have considered an alternative attempt to make sense of Pritchard's response to the Access Problem, namely, the one offered by Kraft (2015). I have argued that the source/content distinction he appeals to is unconvincing and leads to undesirable consequences. As things stand, and without a clear and unproblematic account of Reflective Access, the Access Problem remains a challenge for Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism.[33]

References

Ashton N.A. (2015). 'Undercutting Underdetermination-Based Scepticism.' *Theoria* **81**(4), 333–54.

Boghossian P. (1998). 'What the Externalist Can Know 'A Priori'.' *Philosophical Issues* **9**, 197–211.

Brown J. (1995). 'The Incompatibility of Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access.' *Analysis* **55**(3), 149.

Brown J. (2004). *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Conee E. and Feldman R. (2004). *Evidentialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dennis P. (2014). 'Criteria for Indefeasible Knowledge: John McDowell and 'Epistemological Disjunctivism'.' *Synthese* **191**(17), 4099–113.

Fratantonio G. (2018). 'Armchair Access and Imagination.' *Dialectica* **72**(4), 525–47. doi: 10.1111/1746-8361.12249.

[33]I would like to thank Matthew Chrisman, Jaakko Hirvelä, Clayton Littlejohn, Aidan McGlynn, Duncan Pritchard, Martin Smith, Lukas Schwengerer, Max van den Broek, Giorgio Volpe, and Timothy Williamson for useful comments on earlier drafts of this paper. I would like to thank the participants to the "Perception and Justified Belief Conference" at Ruhr-University Bochum, and to the "New Trend in Epistemology Conference" at University of Pavia, where I have presented parts of this paper. I am also very grateful to Claire Field, Chris Kelp, Tommaso Piazza, Kegan Shaw, Mona Simion, and Simon Wimmer for useful conversation on this topic in those occasions. Finally, I would like to thank two anonymous referees for the very useful comments on this paper. This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 758539.

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Fratantonio G. (Forthcoming). 'Evidential Internalism and Evidential Externalism.' In M. Lasonen-Aarnio and C. Littlejohn (eds), *The Routledge Handbook for the Philosophy of Evidence*. London: Routledge.
Fratantonio G. and McGlynn G. (2018). 'Reassessing the Case Against Evidential Externalism.' In V. Mitova (ed.), *The Factive Turn in Epistemology*, pp. 84–101. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Ghijsen H. (2015). 'The Basis Problem for Epistemological Disjunctivism Revisited.' *Erkenntnis* **80**(6), 1147–56.
Greco J. (2014). 'Pritchard's Epistemological Disjunctivism: How Right? How Radical? How Satisfying?' *Philosophical Quarterly* **64**(254), 115–22.
Hawthorne J. (2005). 'The Case for Closure.' In E. Sosa and M. Steup (eds), *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, pp. 26–43. Oxford: Blackwell.
Kallestrup J. (2010). 'Recent Work on McKinsey's Paradox.' *Analysis* **71**, 157–71.
Kraft T. (2013). 'Skeptical Scenarios Are Not Error-Possibilities.' *Erkenntnis* **78**, 59–72.
Kraft T. (2015). 'Epistemological Disjunctivism's Genuine Access Problem.' *Theoria* **81**(4), 311–32.
Littlejohn C. (2011). 'Armchair Access and Evidence.' *Synthese* **179**(3), 479–500.
McKinsey M. (1991). 'Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access.' *Analysis* **51**(1), 9–16.
McKinsey M. (2002). 'Forms of Externalism and Privileged Access.' *Philosophical Perspectives* **16**(s16), 199–224.
McKinsey M. (2007). 'Externalism and Privileged Access are Inconsistent.' In B. McLaughlin and J. Cohen (eds), *Contemporary Debates in the Philosophy of Mind*. Oxford: Blackwell.
Nuccetelli S. (ed.) (2003). *New Essays on Semantic Externalism and Self-Knowledge*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Pritchard D. (2012). *Epistemological Disjunctivism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Pritchard D. (2015). 'Epistemic Dependence.' *Philosophical Perspectives* **29**(1), 305–324.
Pritchard D. (2016). *Epistemic Angst: Radical Scepticism and the Groundlessness of Our Believing*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Putnam H. (1975). 'The Meaning of Meaning.' *Minnesota Studies in The Philosophy of Science* **7**, 131–93.
Ranalli C. (2014). 'Luck, Propositional Perception, and the Entailment Thesis.' *Synthese*, **191**(6), 1223–47.
Sawyer S. (1998). 'Privileged Access to the World.' *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* **76**, 523–33.
Silins N. (2005). 'Deception and Evidence.' *Philosophical Perspectives* **19**, 375–404.
Williamson T. (2000). *Knowledge and Its Limits*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Zalabardo J. (2015). 'Epistemic Disjunctivism and the Evidential Problem.' *Analysis* **75**(4), 615–27.

Giada Fratantonio is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Helsinki, working as part of the ERC Project "Competence and Success in Epistemology and Beyond". Her research mainly focuses on issues related to the notions of evidence and epistemic justification both in traditional as well as social epistemology.

Cite this article: Fratantonio G (2021). Reflective Access, Closure, and Epistemological Disjunctivism. *Episteme* **18**, 555–575. https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26

https://doi.org/10.1017/epi.2019.26 Published online by Cambridge University Press