

## *Littlejohn - The Unity of Reason*

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September 12, 2018

Littlejohn (CL) discusses the relationship between practical reasons and theoretical reasons: between reasons to act and reasons to believe

Two primary accounts (according to CL):<sup>1</sup>

*Knowledge Account (KPR)* when you're faced with some p-dependent choice, it would be proper for you to treat p as a reason **for action** iff **you know p**

*Justification Account (JPR)* when you're faced with some p-dependent choice, it would be proper for you to treat p as a reason *for action* iff *you justifiably believe p*

<sup>1</sup> Note that CL is presupposing that all reasons are propositions

Now consider three plausible assumptions:

*assumption 1* a common epistemic standard governs practical and theoretical reason

*assumption 2* if you justifiably believe p, you'd be justified in treating the (apparent) fact that p as a reason for believing at least some of p's obvious consequences

*assumption 3* you can justifiably believe what you don't know

If all three are true, we can make the following argument for JPR and against KPR:

1. Suppose I know and am justified in believing that p
2. By A2, it's possible that there's some proposition q that's an obvious consequence of p, and that I'm justified in believing on the basis of my justified belief in p
3. By A3, it's possible that I don't know that q
  - (a) Suppose for reductio that KPR is true
  - (b) then it would be improper to treat q as a reason for action
  - (c) so, I'm justified in believing that q but it's improper for me to treat q as a reason for action
  - (d) so, there's no common epistemic standard governing practical and theoretical reason. This contradicts A1!

4. so, KPR is false

NB: parallel problems don't arise if we replace KPR with JPR on line (3a): in that case it *is* proper to treat q as a reason for action (so line 3b is false), so we can't derive the contradiction

CL's takeaway:

- if the independent case for KPR is strong enough, then we should reject one of the assumptions
- Assumption 3 is the most vulnerable, so that's what we'd reject
- so, let's consider the case for KPR

Clarification:

Here's a simpler argument:

1. it's proper to treat p as a reason for belief iff it's proper to treat p as a reason for action
2. it's proper to treat p as a reason for action only if p is true
3. so, it's proper to treat p as a reason for belief only if p is true

NB that this is

Gloss on the main idea: what this shows is a conflict between common intuitions about theoretical and practical reasons: the latter are factive, the former are not. But if its possible to act and to believe for the very same reason, then that's impossible. So either we must concede the factivity of theoretical reasons, or concede the non-factivity of practical reasons. CL is advocating pan-factivism.

then I'm justified in treating p as a reason for action (this follows from (1) together with either KPR or JPR)

Argument for JPR:

1. If JPR is false, then it's possible to justifiably believe p but not be permitted to act for the reason that p<sup>2</sup>
2. It's not possible to justifiably believe that p but not be permitted to act for the reason that p: that's an impossible kind of akrasia
3. So, JPR is true

<sup>2</sup> Or vice versa, but CL doesn't consider that possibility at this point

The argument is valid, but P1 is false:

- P1 says that the norm of belief is not *weaker* than the norm of action
- Still possible that

But this shows only that the norm of belief can't be *weaker* than the norm for action

The argument depends on two key assumptions: