

8. McWilliams 2019: Confirmation bias and evidentialism

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I. Scrutiny and Accessibilism

Recall Kelly's picture:

- Subjects polarize when confronted with mixed evidence because they engage in *selective scrutiny*.
- **Evidentialism:** What's reasonable for you to believe is determined by your *evidence*.
- Subject's tendency for selective scrutiny is not part of their evidence, but the *results* of it (alternative explanation of incongruent study; none of congruent study) are.

(In the broad sense.)

→ Polarization is reasonable.

McWilliams: *What is your evidence?*

Accessibilism: A proposition is part of your evidence only if it is potentially accessible to you by introspection or reflection.

Introspection: do you feel cold?
Reflection: What's your mother's birthday?

The *hard question*: how much (introspective/reflective) work can a proposition require and still be potentially accessible?

Range of answers, going from (extreme versions of) **internalism** to **externalism**.

- Extreme internalism: only what's immediately present to your mind.
- Moderate internalism: what could easily *become* present.
- Moderate externalism: what you *should* have before your mind, if rational/diligent.
- Extreme externalism: what an *ideal* agent would know.

$2+2 = _$. Present experiences.

$8 + 6 = _$. Are you hungry?

$13 \times 8 = _$. What are your insecurities?

Is Goldbach's conjecture true?
What are your deepest desires?

McWilliams: some moderate version is plausible one.

Kelly: subject's tendency for selective scrutiny is not accessible to them, so polarization is reasonable.

McWilliams:

P1 Accessibilism is true.

P2 What your motivations are doesn't change what's accessible.

P3 Changing subjects' motivations *does* change whether they selectively scrutinize and whether they polarize.

C Polarization as a result of selective scrutiny is *not* reasonable.

And evidentialism.

Schuette and Fazio 1995

Discuss!

- How would Kelly respond?
- Thinking about political cases (Fox and NYT run competing news stories, say), does this seem right?