NON-JUSTIFICATIONISM AND THE NEGATIVIST LEGEND ABOUT KARL POPPER'S PHILOSOPHY

GEREKÇELENDİRİCİ OLMAYAN VE KARL POPPER'IN FELSEFESİNE İLİŞKİN KUŞKUCU ANLATI

Dmytro Sepetyi*

Abstract:

In this paper, I discuss the meaning of non-justificationism as advanced by Karl Popper and William W. Bartley III. The construals by David Miller and Alan Musgrave are critically discussed. With respect to Miller's view of non-justificationism, I argue that it is not supported by Popper's and Bartley's explanations and arguments; however, it contributes to the pretty common misrepresentation of Popper's views ("the negativist legend") as outrageously implausible. With respect to Musgrave's interpretation, I argue that if it is construed as a comprehensive theory of (good) reasons, or of the justification of belief-acts (rather than belief-contents), then this brings back, with no satisfactory solution, the initial problem of infinite justificatory regress. I argue that in fact non-justificationism, as the conception of rationality soundly supported by Popper's and Bartley's arguments, reduces to the view that for rational discussion to succeed, no absolute foundations are needed—rational arguments may proceed with tentative premises (that may be called "provisional foundations") that are considered by the participants of a given discussion as unproblematic or highly plausible (premises on which the participants are likely to agree), but are kept open for questioning, criticism and the possibility of revision in further discussions. Besides, I explain that critical rationalism integrates the sound elements of both classical empiricism and rationalism, by admitting that there is "immediate knowledge" of both kinds, experiential (observational beliefs) and non-experiential (logics, common-sense epistemological assumptions, inborn or learned expectations, basic moral ideas, etc.); however, unlike classical empiricism and rationalism, critical rationalism does not dogmatize this "immediate knowledge"; it denies that such knowledge is certain or highly probable (in the sense of the probability calculus), and considers it, as well as everything else, as fallible, open to critical discussion and revision.

Key words: Popper, non-justificationism, critical rationalism

Öz:

Bu yazıda, Karl Popper ve William W. Bartley III tarafından geliştirilen gerekçelendirici olmayanın anlamını tartışıyorum. David Miller ve Alan Musgrave'in yorumları eleştirel bir şekilde tartışılır. Miller'ın gerekçelendirmeci olmayan görüşüne ilişkin, Popper's ve Bartley'nin açıklamaları ve argümanları tarafından desteklenmediğini savunuyorum; bununla birlikte, Popper'ın görüşlerinin(kuşkucuı anlatı) olarak oldukça yaygın bir şekilde aşırı derecede mantıksız olarak yanlış sunumuna katkıda bulunur. Musgrave'nin yorumuyla ilgili olarak. Eğer kapsamlı bir (iyi)nedenler teorisi veya inanç-eylemler gerekçelendirilmesi olarak yorumlanırsa, bunun, tatmin edici bir çözüm olmaksızın, başlangıçtaki sonsuz haklı çıkarıcı kısır döngü sorununu geri getireceğini savunuyorum Popper'ın ve Bartley'nin argümanları tarafından sağlam bir şekilde desteklenen rasyonalite kavramı olarak gerekçelendirici olmayan, rasyonel tartışmanın başarılı olması için hiçbir mutlak temele ihtiyaç olmadığı görüşüne

* Asst. Prof., Zaporizhzhia State Medical University, Ukraine

indirgediğini iddia ediyorum - rasyonel argümanlar geçici öncüllerle ilerleyebilir (bu, Belirli bir tartışmanın katılımcıları tarafından sorunsuz veya son derece makul olarak kabul edilen (katılımcıların üzerinde anlaşmaya varacağı öncüller), ancak daha sonraki tartışmalarda sorgulamaya, eleştiriye ve gözden geçirme olasılığına açık tutulan "geçici, muvakkat temeller" olarak adlandırılır. Ayrıca, eleştirela akılcılığın, deneysel (gözlemsel inançlar) ve deneyimsel olmayan (mantıklar, sağduyu epistemolojik varsayımlar, doğuştan gelen) her iki türden "dolaysız, doğrudan bilgi" olduğunu kabul ederek, hem klasik deneyciliğin hem akılcılığın sağlam unsurlarını bütünleştirdiğini açıklıyorum. öte yandan öğrenilmiş beklentiler, temel ahlaki fikirler vb.); ancak, klasik deneycilik ve akılcılıktan farklı olarak, eleştirel akılcılık bu "doğrudan bilgiyi" dogmatize etmez; (olasılık hesabı anlamında) bu tür bilginin kesin veya yüksek derecede olası olduğunu reddeder ve onu ve diğer her şeyi yanılabilir, eleştirel tartışılabilir ve gözden geçirmeyi kabul eder.

Anahtar kelimeler: Popper, gerekçelendirici olmayan, eleştirel akılcılık

Non-justificationism is well known to be the core of Karl Popper's philosophy of critical rationalism (CR) and William Bartley's philosophy of comprehensively critical (pancritical) rationalism. Put in the simplest way, non-justificationism is the negation of justificationism, that is, of the view that for belief to be rational, it must be justified by sound argument, or by sufficient or good reasons. However, there is no general agreement as to what exactly it involves, or should involve, and how far it goes, or should go. Remarkably, the two most prominent modern Popperian epistemologists, David Miller and Alan Musgrave, disagree and criticize one another on the issue. And I disagree with both of them in some pretty important respects, although I agree with Popper and Bartley (at least, insofar as I understand them). So one thing I want to explain is why I think that Miller's and Musgrave's views are different from those of Popper and Bartley, and why this difference may be important. And perhaps I will be able to give you some idea of why I disagree with Miller and Musgrave while I agree with Popper and Bartley.

For me, the importance of the issue derives to a great extent from what I like to call "the negativist legend" about Popper's philosophy. (This is a sort of counterpart to "the positivist legend," against which Popper and his followers made so much just complaint.) Roughly, it is that Popper's philosophy is all about negation, falsification, refutation, argument against. In the most unsympathetic versions, the legend is that Popper's philosophy is just a kind of discouraging scepticism, or irrationalism, and that it is preposterously defying common sense.

Let me provide one example, which was stimulating for me personally. Some seven years ago I was reading the book by Stephen Law, *The Philosophy Gym* (a bestseller that introduces a lay reader to the most important philosophical issues in a very engaging way). In a chapter of this book, Law touches upon Popper's philosophy and attributes to Popper the view "that we never possess any grounds for supposing that a scientific theory is true" (Law 2004, 126). Although this statement is pretty similar to some things Popper said about reasons for holding a scientific theory to be true (I will dwell on this point a bit later), it is very misleading because it is taken out of the context and is not provided with appropriate explanations and qualifications (which Popper had given). In another book, Law directly misrepresents Popper's view—he writes that Popper, in effect, accepts Hume's conclusion

that beliefs (1) that tomorrow morning the sun will appear over the horizon and (2) that tomorrow morning a million-mile-wide luminous panda will appear over the horizon are equally reasonable (Law 2007, 175). I emailed Law to point out that this is a misinterpretation that directly contradicts much of what Popper really wrote. In reply, Law remarked that this is "a very common understanding of Popper, see e.g. Prof. …" (a pretty prominent epistemologist whose name I omit because I had no opportunity to check whether he really misinterpreted Popper in this way).

Two years later, I was very much amazed to find out that David Miller, who was a friend and close collaborator of Popper and is perhaps the most reputed among Popper's modern followers, in his book *Critical Rationalism: A Restatement and Defense*, advanced a view that looks very much like Law's "very common understanding of Popper." Miller seems to identify justificationism with the view that rationality has something to do with sufficient (conclusive) or good (inconclusive) reasons. Accordingly, Miller, as a non-justificationist, goes so far as to deny the existence of both sufficient and good reasons:

> "The subjective feeling of being in possession of good reasons may exist. But as far as rational thought is concerned, evaluation in terms of good reasons is a pure epiphenomenon." (Miller 1994, 66)

Although Miller admits the existence of reasons in the subjective sense, he denies that they may be good, and he denies that reasons have some job to do for rational thought:

> "Reasons exist, no doubt, at least in the subjective sense, but not good ones... But this does not imply that rationality is impossible, either in intellectual affairs or in practice. Reason has a job to do in every sphere; reasons, poor things, have not." (Miller 1994, 52)

On Miller's view, the only thing that matters for rationality is criticism, negative argument, attempts to refute a theory.

Miller's contentions, although presented as a restatement of critical rationalism, go far beyond Popper and Bartley. For Popper, for one, it was a perfectly usual and unproblematic thing to claim having weighty, or good, or "more or less sufficient" reasons. Let me adduce just two conspicuous examples.

In a lecture delivered at the University of Tübingen in 1981, Popper formulated three "principles that form the basis of every rational discussion, that is, of every discussion undertaken in the search for truth"; one of these principles is "the principle of rational discussion: we want to try, as impersonally as possible, *to weigh up our reasons for and against a theory*" (Popper 1992, 199). (Italics mine.) From this, it is clear that Popper believed that there are reasons, both for and against a theory, and that they may be weighted up so that some turn out weightier than others (at least, for a person).

In the book *Realism and the Aim of Science*, Popper formulates another important principle: "we should not depart from common sense … without some fairly good reason" (Popper 1983, 47).[1] It seems that Miller goes against this principle in two ways: first, he

[1] Of course, this principle provides us with no "criteria" or "algorithm," for one needs, in each individual case, to judge for oneself what accords with, and what departs from, common sense, and what reasons are "fairly good."

departs from common sense without fairly good reason; second, he denies that there are such things as good reasons.[2]

Yet there is one important point in Popper's writings that may need explanation in order to avoid misinterpretation. It is concerned with a very important kind of statements, the one at the very center of Popper's interest—scientific theories that are, or have as their parts, universal statements (laws of nature).[3] About such theories, Popper argued (with reference to Bartley) that it is impossible to justify them by giving "'positive reasons' …; reasons, that is, for holding them to be true, or to be at least 'probable' (in the sense of the probability calculus)" (Popper 1983, 19); however, "we can often give reasons for regarding one theory as preferable to another" by "pointing out that, and how, one theory has hitherto withstood criticism better than another" (Popper 1983, 19). Popper proposed to call such reasons "critical reasons." Two points need to be taken into account here.

The first is that the term "positive reasons" does not mean "reasons for"; the adjective "positive" is used by Popper rather to imply truth *sensu stricto* (rather than being a better approximation to the truth, as compared with known alternatives) or high probability (in the sense of the probability calculus).

The second point to be taken into account is that this case concerns scientific theories, and it is not generalizable to all kinds of positions (statements). For example, with respect to a (meta) statement that a certain scientific theory is false, we can have pretty good reasons to believe that the statement is true. Or, if we have pretty weighty reasons to prefer one scientific theory (A) over another (B), we have exactly the same—and, therefore, just as weighty—reasons to believe in the truth of the (meta)statement that A is better than B.[4] Also, we can have pretty good reasons to hold that the statement "Theory C is false" is true. Outside science, as well as in science with respect to non-universal statements, there are lots of positions such that we can have pretty good reasons to believe them to be true. For example: "The Earth is round rather than cubic," "Barack Obama is the President of USA," "Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939 and so unleashed the World War II." In particular, whenever the list of logically possible alternatives is limited and known (for example, "God exists" and "God does not exist"), the reasons to believe a certain position are the same (and, thus, just as weighty) as the reasons to prefer it over the alternative ones.

If we consider Popper's and Bartley's arguments against justificationism, we can see that they have nothing essentially to do with the view that only "negative" arguments, in the sense of reasons against, matter whereas "positive" arguments, in the sense of reasons for, do

[2] In his later book, *Out of Error*, Miller complains that Popper "regrettably, … in several places … slipped into what look like justificationist theses, saying for example that 'we must at least in some cases be able to *give reasons* for the intuitive claim that we have come nearer to the truth, or that some theory T_1 is superseded by some new theory T_2, because T_2 is more like the truth than is T_1' (1972, Chapter 2, §7)" (Miller 2006, p. 126).

[3] Roughly, a universal law statement is a statement that *all* things of a certain class have a certain conceptually independent property (such that does not belong to the class by definition, is not part of the concept of the class), where the class is *open*. A class is open if it is (at least, potentially) infinite, and includes all conceptually fitting things that exist, existed, or will ever exist.

[4] Popper admitted this, and pointed out that "there is a world of difference between a meta-theory that asserts that a theory A is better than a theory B, and another meta-theory that asserts that theory A is, in fact, true (or 'probable')," and "there is a world of difference between arguments that might be considered as valid or weighty reasons in support of the one or the other of these two meta-theories" (Popper 1983, 23).

not. Thus, Bartley introduced the term "justificationism" in the context of "the problem of the limits of rationality," which is that if we are required to justify our beliefs, we can never do this without appealing to some other beliefs that remain unjustified, and so we can never achieve justification. From this, a lot of philosophers argued that we have no choice but to commit ourselves dogmatically to some foundational framework—"that there is an essential logical limitation to rationality: the rational defense and examination of ideas must, for logical reasons, be terminated by an arbitrary and irrational appeal to what can be called dogmas or absolute presuppositions" (Bartley 1984, 221). Bartley confronted this view by arguing that "criticism can be carried out successfully and satisfactorily without … any resort to dogmas or authorities," that "it is not necessary to mark off a special class of statements, the justifiers, which do the justifying and criticizing but are not open to criticism" (Bartley 1984, 223), and thus "there are no limits to rationality in the sense that one must postulate dogmas or presuppositions that must be held exempt from review…" (Bartley 1984, 221).[5] However, Bartley's talk of "criticism" may happen to be misleading, because we are prone to interpret "criticism" as argument against.[6] In fact, Bartley's argument has nothing to do with establishing that arguments against are better off than arguments for. It establishes that we can reasonably argue—whether against or for a position—starting with premises that aren't justified, and that we need not commit ourselves to these premises (take them as "dogmas or presuppositions that must be held exempt from review")—instead, we can tentatively accept them as unproplematic, or as plausible enough, as far as we can judge, for the purpose at hand.

To summarize, Popper's and Bartley's non-justificationist arguments do not warrant any of the following contentions:

• (Good, weighty, etc.) reasons do not exist or, if they exist, they "have no job," as far as rationality is concerned.

• The only arguments (reasons) that matter for rationality are those against the statement at issue.

• There are no "positive reasons" (in the sense of reasons for holding a statement to be true), for whatever statements.

Popper's and Bartley's non-justificationist arguments demonstrate the following:

• Against justificationist (uncritical) rationalism: The demand that every position, to be rationally accepted, should be justified, is self-defeating.

[5] This Bartley's argument can be considered as a generalization of Popper's "Resolution of Fries's Trilemma" in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*: although no basic statement is *absolutely* basic, any can be tested with the use of further basic statements, this procedure of testing should stop somewhere (at a point that is *arbitrary from the purely logical point of view*)—and it stops "at statements about whose acceptance or rejection the various investigators are likely to reach agreement" (if it was not the case that scientists pretty often agree as to what is observed, science would be impossible) (Popper 1959, 104-105).

[6] Bartley himself seems to make such a slip and to be the source of this misunderstanding, in describing his proposition to contrast justificationist and non-justificationist theories of criticism as a generalization of Popper's distinction between verification and falsification (Bartley 1990, 237). In fact, non-justificationism is not a generalization of falsificationism (see, however, the previous footnote); it answers an entirely different problem: the problem of infinite justificationist regress and the purported inevitableness of dogmatic commitment is entirely unlike the problem of the possibility of inductive inference and verification; the non-justificationist solution to the former, unlike falsificationist solution of the latter, need not involve "negativism."

• Against irrationalism: Nevertheless, we may—and better do—hold the rationalist attitude, in the sense of being open to critical discussion (aimed at truth) that may make us revise our beliefs.
• Against "the theory of unrevizable-framework-bound rationality" ("the commitment theory"): For a rational discussion to be possible and fruitful, we do not need to accept some positions dogmatically, as exempt from critical discussion. Instead, we may proceed on tentative (plausible, in the light of what we presently seem to know) premises.
• Generally: No ultimate, unrevizable foundation is needed for rational discussion.

Of course, the fact that Miller's view about reasons is different from Popper's view does not mean that it is wrong. The detailed enough discussion and criticism of Miller's views needs much more space than this paper allows. However, I will make some relevant points here.

Miller complains that it is not clear "what good reasons are supposed to be good for" (Miller 1994, 60). I think that the answer is that usually, when the word combination "good reasons" is used, one means reasons that are good enough for the purpose at hand. In epistemological context, the purpose is a (tentative) judgment as to whether the position (statement, or theory) at issue is true, or good enough approximation to the truth, or false and not good enough. This, of course, does not explain what counts as a good reason, or what are the criteria of something being a good reason. Eventually, it is a matter of personal judgment. Evaluation in terms of good reasons may seem unsatisfactory as subjective and woolly. Why not replace it, as Miller seems to propose, with evaluation in logically neat terms, such as validity of arguments?[7] I think that there is a pretty good reason why.

To begin with, there is no sense at all in being interested in providing merely valid arguments. One can always very easily provide valid argument for and against any statement. (The simplest valid argument for any conclusion is a one-premised argument in which the premise is the same as the conclusion.) What we must be interested in is not merely valid but sound arguments, that is, valid arguments with true premises. But how can we know whether the premises are true? Strictly speaking, we never know, and logics cannot tell us (except for the uninteresting cases of tautologies and self-contradictions). At some points, we should just make our judgments as a matter of informal understanding, or of what just seems to us to be the case, without further argumentative support.

This does not contradict Miller's view, since Miller admitted the necessity of "decisions" or "conjectures" to resolve such conflicts. However, I think that this admission is not sufficient, and the terms "decisions" or "conjectures" are likely to be misleading.[8] It is not

[7] To my earlier criticisms of his views, Miller answered with an email, where he explained that his point is that we shouldn't be interested in providing "good reasons", but "should be interested in providing valid critical arguments."

[8] The term "decision" is appropriate for actions in which *volition* is involved, but not for the process of acquiring, holding, and abandoning beliefs. A person can decide to act in a certain way rather than another, but she cannot decide, and implement the decision, to believe this rather than that.

The term "conjecture" is used by critical rationalists in two essentially different senses. There is "conjecture-1" as invention of a new idea, or theory, and there is "conjecture-2" as a tentative judgment that an idea, or theory, is true, or false, or (un)likely to be a good approximation to the truth. These are very different things; a person can conjecture-1 without conjecturing-2; conjecture-2 is a judgment that follows conjecture-1.

the case that all there is are valid arguments plus "decisions" or "conjectures" as to which statements are to be accepted (classified) as true. Things are not as simple as that.

The process of reasoning is not a smooth passage from what seems to be the case to valid deductive inferences therefrom. If it were, there would be nothing problematic about it, and there would be no job for philosophy. The process of reasoning poses problems for philosophy because (and insofar as) it involves conflicts between positions such that each seems to be true, or a good candidate for being accepted as the best known approximation to the truth. Logics cannot resolve such a conflict; all it can do is to reveal the conflict and help us see what is involved in it.[9] When a conflict is revealed, we must judge what is most likely to be, so to speak, the "weakest link," or how we can resolve the conflict with the least loss. Usually, this is not a matter of straightforward intuitive judgment, or mere conjecture (and even less so "decision"), that it is A rather than B or C that should be renounced as false. Usually, in such conflict situations, judgment is guided by various considerations about what is involved with (renouncing) A, or B, or C, and judgments of how plausible and how important the items involved are. So, weighing up of such considerations (reasons) is necessary, and this cannot be reduced to the validity of the arguments involved.

Another relevant and important point is that considerations (reasons) that are relevant to our judgments (to guide and affect them) are often such that the position those considerations support does not validly (deductively) follow from them. To make sense of this relevance in the form of (deductively) valid argument, additional (bridging) premises are necessary, and these premises should have the form of a statement that describes the conditions when it is reasonable to believe in the truth of propositions of a certain kind, that is, specifies good reasons for believing in the truth of propositions of a certain kind.

To make it clearer, let us consider the following example. There are alternative theories A and B. As far as we can judge, A has hitherto withstood criticism better than B. From this, we arrive at judgment that (more likely than not) A is nearer the truth than B. Now let us try to construct a valid argument to that point. First, let us consider the following argument:

A has hitherto withstood criticism better than B.
Therefore, A is (more likely than not) nearer the truth than B.

This argument is invalid. Now let us consider another argument:

(1) It is reasonable to believe that a theory A is nearer to the truth than an alternative theory B, if A has hitherto withstood criticism better than B.
(2) A has hitherto withstood criticism better than B.
Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that A is nearer the truth than B.

This argument is perfectly valid. However, it involves an additional premise that describes the conditions of reasonable belief (that is, what should count as good reason for

[9] Cf.: M. Notturno: "A valid argument … is not so much a proof as a choice. It presents us with a set of mutually exclusive alternatives. … Logical arguments, contrary to popular belief, cannot force us to accept the truth of their conclusions. They can force us to choose, but they cannot make the choice for us." (Notturno 1999, p. 71-72) "[I]t is judgments of our own that are really necessary. Valid arguments play the extremely important role of clarifying our options. But they cannot make our judgments for us." (Notturno 1999, p. 146)

believing) that one theory is nearer the truth than another. And its conclusion is not that A is nearer the truth than B, but that it is reasonable to believe that A is nearer the truth than B.

These considerations ground Alan Musgrave's interpretation of non-justificationism as the view that theories, or statements, or belief-contents cannot be justified but that belief-acts (such as believing a proposition or preferring one theory over another) can. There are no reasons for (justification of) "S," where "S" is a statement, or a theory, or a belief-content; however, there may be reasons for—we may be justified in—believing that S (Musgrave 2000, 174-175, 280-282; Musgrave 2004, 3-4; Musgrave 2007, 177-187).

So far, I agree with Musgrave. But there seem to be more disputable aspects to Musgrave's views on the problem of justification. If I correctly understand him, Musgrave holds that for a belief-act to be reasonable there should be good reasons or justification for it[10], and he attempts to construct a comprehensive critical rationalist theory of belief-act justification. If this is so, I think he fails, because the requirement that belief-acts, to be reasonable, should be justified brings back the initial problem with justification—that of the dilemma of infinite justificatory regress or vicious circle—with no satisfactory solution.

A necessary part of Bartley's solution to this problem was that justification is not required for rationality. Now Musgrave seems to bring the requirement back, and it does not essentially matter that now it is about belief-acts rather than belief-contents. The justification-problem remains essentially the same: to justify your believing that S, you need to refer to some further positions that serve as justifiers, but then you need to justify your believing in those purported justifiers, to provide second-level justifiers for believing in the first-level justifiers, and then third-level justifiers for believing in the second-level justifies, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Musgrave attempts to manage the problem in the way that, as far as I understand it, involves the following two major points.

1) On Musgrave's view, critical rationalism is the theory of rationality that assumes, as the most fundamental, the following principle of reasonableness (rationality):

(CR) "It is reasonable to adopt the theory that best survives critical scrutiny."

Critical rationalist's justification (reason) for holding critical rationalism is that it fits the principle (CR), that is, it best survives critical scrutiny.

2) Critical rationalism assumes also the following principle:

(P&T) Perceptual and testimentory beliefs, that is, beliefs acquired from one's own perceptual experiences or from other peoples' testimonies as to what they have observed or

[10] I had an email correspondence with Musgrave, and he wrote, among other things: "To say that a belief is reasonable is to say that there is a reason or justification for it." This assumption is perspicuously implicit in an argument advanced in (Musgrave 2009): Musgrave explains that "perceptual beliefs are *foundational* beliefs … in the sense that they are not obtained by inference or argument from other beliefs," and then proceeds to argue that experiences should count as (non-logical) reasons for belief-acts, because otherwise "none of our 'foundational beliefs,' beliefs not obtained by arguing from other beliefs, are reasonable, since there is no reason for them. Add that any belief obtained by arguing from unreasonable beliefs is itself unreasonable, and it follows that all beliefs are unreasonable." (Musgrave 2009, p. 13) My point in the discussion that follows is that for this approach to work, we should loosen the requirement for reasonability much more than that—to admit to the class of foundational beliefs an indefinite multitude of non-perceptual beliefs such that the only reason for believing them is that they just seem to be true or reasonable (to a person).

experienced or done[11], are not required to be justified, or are to be considered as "justified by default," if no weighty reasons are provided against believing them (Musgrave 2007, pp. 200-202, 206-209).[12]

However, such a justification raises at least two grave objections.
The first, frankly admitted by Musgrave himself:

"Self-subsumption is too easy to obtain. 'It is reasonable to believe anything said in a paper by Alan Musgrave' subsumes itself, since it occurs in this paper, but it is crazy epistemic principle. So is 'Granny told me I ought to believe everything she tells me.' And 'The Pope declared *ex cathedra* that everything declared *ex cathedra* by the Pope is a matter of faith' is no triumph either." (Musgrave 2007, p. 190)

Although this seems to be a very grave objection, Musgrave proposes to "bite the bullet" because, anyway, for obvious logical reasons, no theory of rationality (reasonableness) can do anything better, in order to justify its own acceptance, than to appeal to those criteria of rationality (reasonableness) that this theory itself takes to be the most basic. If it appealed to some other criteria, it would contradict itself (what it says about the criteria of reasonableness), and the rationalist cannot tolerate self-contradiction. Even if self-subsumption is too easy to obtain, it is, at least, a necessary condition for a theory to be rationally acceptable (that is, its absence is a sufficient condition to rule out the theory as rationally inacceptable).

For me, it seems that such a poor purported justification (reason)—one that makes CR as reasonable as the belief that everything granny tells me is true because she told me that everything she tells me is true—is not to be considered as justification, or anything even remotely like good reason. It would be at least more honest for a critical rationalist to admit that she believes CR, or some further considerations in its favor that she can summon up, with no justification, or reason, except that it seems reasonable to her. And this is not the only exception to the requirement of justification for belief-acts that the critical rationalist will be forced to make, on thinking the matters through. Rather, there will be no end to such exceptions, as we will see shortly.

The second objection is that if the principle (CR) "It is reasonable to adopt the theory that best survives critical scrutiny" is granted, there arises the problem of the infinite regress of criticizers.

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[11] Musgrave describes *the testimentory beliefs* as "beliefs acquired from other people" (Musgrave 2007, 209), which description allows for all sorts of beliefs. On the other hand, the examples he adduces and the very name "the testimentory beliefs" suggest that what he really means are beliefs that derive from other peoples' testimonies as to what they have observed or experienced or done, which is a far more limited class of beliefs.

[12] In (P&T) I have conjoined two principles, as formulated by Musgrave:

(E) "It is reasonable to *perceptually* believe that *P* (at time *t*) if and only if *P* has not failed to withstand criticism (at time *t*)" (Musgrave 2007, 207)

and

(T) "A's testimentory belief that P is reasonable (at time *t*) if and only if *P* has not failed to withstand criticism from A (at time *t*)" (Musgrave 2007, 209).

In other papers, Musgrave makes nearly the same point as (E) by proposing that the reasons for believing a statement need not necessarily be (believing in) other statements; instead, they may be perceptual experiences (Musgrave 2004, 4-6; Musgrave 2009, 13). For example, my seeing a cat is a good reason (justifier) for my believing that there is a cat.

Let us think of the following questions. What should critical scrutiny consist of? How—on what considerations—should we judge that theory A rather that some alternative theory "best survives critical scrutiny"? What are legitimate statements to be used as "criticizers"?

Surely, we can't take any arbitrary statements as equally legitimate, or good, or weighty criticizers, for this would make all alternative theories equally neither-bad-nor-good against critical scrutiny. Should we evaluate criticizers on the same principle, that it is reasonable to adopt criticizers that "best survive critical scrutiny"? But this would require second-level-criticizers for the first-level-criticizers, and there is the same problem of justification, or reasons, for adopting the second-level-criticizers, and then third-level-criticizers, and so on *ad infinitum*. So, we have the infinite justificatory regress about criticizers that precisely mirrors the initial problem that Popper's-Bartley's non-justificationism was advanced to solve.

However, is this not helped by the principle (P&T)? This principle ensures that perceptual and testimentory beliefs can serve as those points where the regress can be stopped; they can be used as criticizers whose credentials are granted by default, even before they themselves undergo critical scrutiny. Does this solve the problem? Unhappily, it does not.

To begin with, how are we to justify our acceptance of the principle P&T itself? It obviously won't do to say that it is reasonable because it best survives critical scrutiny—we do not yet have any means (criticizers) with which to carry out the scrutiny. It won't also do to say that the conjunction of (CR) and (P&T) is reasonable in its own lights, on its own criteria, as self-subsuming. First, as we have already seen, such a self-subsumption is too cheap to count as justification. Second, there is no way to judge whether the conjunction of (CR) and (P&T) is self-subsuming, that is, best survives criticisms given criticizers of the kind allowed by (P&T)—perceptual and testimentory beliefs. You cannot criticize principles such as (CR) and (P&T) with perceptual and testimentory beliefs alone, because no predictions about observable events or human actions or experiences follow from such principles.

Generally, real critical practice, in science as well as outside it, would be impossible without a lot of other considerations that cannot be justified (even in terms of best surviving critical scrutiny) by appeals to perceptual and testimentory beliefs (even as criticizers), such as economy, elegance, common sense, or intuitive sense of plausibility, etc. Besides, various perceptual and testimentory beliefs often conflict with one another, and so one needs to resolve these conflicts, but one cannot do this by mere appeals to some other perceptual and testimentory beliefs. (There is no reason why these other beliefs should be preferred to the initial ones.) In some points of critical discussion, when different considerations conflict, one should just make one's own unjustified judgment.

So, any rational discussion necessarily involves a lot of beliefs that are acquired and held without justification (even in terms of best surviving critical scrutiny), and these beliefs cannot be neatly taken inventory of, and ordered hierarchically. There is no definite legitimate all-purpose foundation for any rational discussion to proceed from. (The belief in some such

foundation would be that "commitment" against which Bartley advanced non-justificationism.) Bartley was perfectly clear on this point:

> "…pancritical rationalist, like other people, *holds countless unexamined presuppositions and assumptions*, many of which may be false. His rationality consists in his willingness to submit these to critical considerations when he discovers them or when they are pointed out to him... When one belief is subjected to criticism, many others, of course, have to be taken for granted—including those with which the criticism is being carried out. The latter are used as the basis of criticism not because they are themselves justified or beyond criticism, but because they are *unproblematical at present*. These are, *in that sense alone and during that time alone*, beyond criticism. We stop criticizing—temporarily—not when we reach uncriticizable authorities, but when we reach positions against which we can find no criticisms. If criticisms of these are raised later, the critical process then continues." (Bartley 1984, 121-122) (Italics mine)[13]

To put things in a nutshell, the non-justificationist (comprehensively critical) rationalism is the response to the challenge of what may be called "the commitment argument." The commitment argument is that, because of the problem of the infinite justificatory regress (or vicious circularity), the following holds: (1) in our reasoning (arguing) we inevitably ultimately appeal to some positions that are not supported by further reasons (arguments) but accepted on credence, and (2) therefore, we have no escape but to commit ourselves to these positions, hold them as uncriticizable and unrevizable dogmas. (Comprehensively) critical rationalism meets this challenge by admitting (1) and explaining that (2) does not follow and is false: although any argument appeals to some positions taken as "basic" (relative to the argument), these need not be taken as basic in the absolute sense; we may accept them tentatively for a while (as such that seem unproblematic or, at least, credible enough), leaving open the possibility of their problematization and revision as a result of further arguments.

To illuminate the non-justificationist (critical rationalist) conception of rationality, it is useful to compare it with what Musgrave, in the book *Common Sense, Science and Scepticism* (chapter 1), describes as the answer to the problem of infinite regress by the philosophers he calls "dogmatists" (which include classical rationalists and empiricists). The "dogmatist" answer is based on the distinction between

immediate knowledge, which does not require further justification

and

mediated knowledge, which requires justification by immediate knowledge.

[13] Mark Notturno's explanation is also very much relevant here:

> "Critical thinkers … *question* and *test* the beliefs that others take for granted. In so doing, they oftentimes clarify how some of their beliefs are based upon others. But this basing of beliefs one upon another must ultimately end. And if you are a critical thinker, then you will, somewhere in the course of your tests, inevitably come upon statements that you believe for no other reason than that they seem true—*to you*. In such a case, it would be more accurate to say not that such statements are justified, but that they seem, *in your judgment*, to be true." (Notturno 1999, 147)

"Dogmatists" differ as to what is the source of immediate knowledge. Some (called "empiricists") believe that it is experience (perceptions), others (called "rationalists" or "intellectualists")—that it is reason (its inherent indubitable ideas). (Musgrave 2000, 13-18)

What is CR's view about immediate knowledge? Does it admit that there is such knowledge? If yes, what kind of knowledge it is, perceptual or inherent to reason?

I think that it would be correct to say that CR agrees with "dogmatism" that there is "immediate knowledge" that does not require further justification, or argumentative support. And CR admits that there is "immediate knowledge" of both—"empiricist" and "rationalist"—kinds. On the "empiricist" side, it is observational beliefs, on the "rationalist" side, it is logics, common sense epistemological assumptions, inborn or learned expectations, basic moral ideas, etc. Immediate knowledge has as its sources experience, inborn expectations, intuition, etc. But, unlike "dogmatism," CR does not dogmatize this "immediate knowledge." CR denies that it is certain or highly probable (in the sense of the probability calculus). CR also denies that it is unrevizable, that there is no way to check and correct it. Instead, CR contends that "immediate knowledge," as well as mediated, is fallible and open to examination, critical discussion and revision.

Besides, on the CR view, there is no neat demarcation between immediate and mediated knowledge. First, there are degrees: for example, in science, an observational statement may be heavily theory-laden and so pretty much mediated, but it is more immediate than the theory that it is intended to test. Second, "immediate knowledge" can be criticized by other—immediate or mediate—knowledge, and can be supported by yet other—immediate or mediate—knowledge. When some points of "immediate knowledge" are challenged, we try to find reasons pro and contra and weigh them and make our reasoned judgment. Those reasons are just appellations to other—immediate or mediate—knowledge.

Hence, there can be no overall inventory of "immediate knowledge" and the relationships between its components. And "immediate knowledge" has no absolutely "hard core"—ideas and principles which are absolutely basic and, so, beyond the possibility of criticism and revision.

Besides, CR contends that all that "knowledge" is not knowledge in the sense of justified true beliefs—it is conjectural knowledge with no certificate of truth (certainty), or even high probability (in the sense of the probability calculus).

The meaning of Popperian non-justificationism can be better understood if we keep in mind the purpose, *raison d'etre*, of the justificationist enterprise. Why do philosophers traditionally bother so much about justification? I think that the major motivation comes from the concept of knowledge, as traditionally understood. The standard definition of "knowledge" is "justified true belief." It was Plato who famously emphasized the difference between knowledge and mere true belief: for a person to know that X, it is not enough that the person believed that X and that X were the case; it is necessary also that the person had sufficient reasons to believe that X, that is, was justified in believing that X. If a person has a belief without sufficient reasons, and that belief happens to be true by accident, the person does not really know. Now, for many centuries after Plato, up to the present day, most philosophers concerned with knowledge believed this distinction—between knowledge and accidentally true belief—is of supreme importance. Hence, they searched for the right way to

draw such a distinction: what should count as sufficient reasons? A lot of different theories were proposed and opposed one another, and it seems that there is no way to adjudicate between them impartially, except to admit that they all are unsatisfactory because they fail to satisfy their own requirement of being justified, except in a question-begging way (relative to their own criteria). The enterprise of justification looks more and more hopeless, and one can understand why it is so by merely thinking through the logical situation—the problem of infinite justificatory regress that "must, for logical reasons, be terminated by an arbitrary and irrational appeal to what can be called dogmas or absolute presuppositions" (Bartley 1984, 221). The only alternative to such dogmatic commitment is to discard the justificationist enterprise—the project of epistemology guided by Plato's distinction between knowledge as justified true belief and mere true belief. (Here, it is appropriate to recollect Popper's "provocative" claim that the best of the knowledge we have, scientific knowledge, is not knowledge: it is not composed of justified true beliefs (Popper 1983, pp. 12-13). Although Popper made a strong argument for this contention, the philosophical mainstream still fails to take it seriously.)

However, discarding justificationism does not mean discarding reasons. It does not even mean that any claim that a theory, or a belief is justified, is false. In ordinary language, one can talk of (tentative) justification in the sense of providing arguments in favor of a position, or explaining reasons why one holds or prefers it.[14] Nothing is wrong with such a "justification"; however, we must be aware that it cannot bear anything like the burden that justification is traditionally (in particular, by Plato and Hume) required to bear.

It is worth noting that such a "justification-in-ordinary-language," or substantiation, or argumentative support, besides being tentative, has a "more-or-less" rather than "either-or" character. Instead of dividing positions into justified and unjustified, we evaluate the balance of reasons *pro* and *contra* as more-or-less favoring-or-disfavoring the position at issue. And this makes us accept or decline the position (as likely to be true or a good enough approximation to the truth) tentatively, without committing ourselves to its truth or falsity, leaving widely open the possibility of revision.

If my construal is right, Popperian non-justificationism can be "positively" redescribed as "evaluationism": its point is that we should be interested in evaluation of arguments (in terms of validity, soundness, and weightiness) and positions (in terms of truth, falsity and verisimilitude), and do not bother about justification. Justificationism makes for a defensive attitude that is not conductive to the development of knowledge; it is as if our beliefs are accused of being non-legitimate, or we are accused of holding such non-legitimate beliefs, and now we are expected to justify them, or ourselves. Unlike this, evaluationist attitude is explorative: we try to find out reasons (arguments) *pro* and *contra* a position at issue, evaluate their strength and balance, and, as a result, tentatively accept or decline the position.

[14] Popper admitted that "giving reasons for one's preference can of course be called a justification (in ordinary language)," and added the reservations that "it is not a justification in the sense criticized here," and that "our preferences are 'justified' only relative to the present state of our discussion" (Popper 1983, p. 20). He also conceded that "to have some 'foundation,' or justification, may be important for a belief" but it should not be required of scientific hypotheses (Popper 1983, p. 22).

In conclusion, I think it is appropriate to draw attention to the curious inconsistency involved in the preoccupation with belief-justification. Most philosophers seem to be aware of the fact that belief-acquiring or belief-holding (believing that X is the case) is not a matter of deliberate choice. However, they seem to forget about this as soon as they start talking about justification. The point is that we believe something because we are led to believe it by our experiences and various considerations and arguments we had encountered—not because we have chosen to believe it. A person cannot decide that from such-and-such a moment she will start believing such-and-such a proposition, and implement the decision. If so, a person cannot be reasonably held responsible for her beliefs, and the idea that we need to justify our beliefs makes no sense. However, a person can be reasonably invited to consider the arguments (reasons) for and against a position, which may result in changes in the person's beliefs.

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