1. The Internalist Conception of Justification

According to internalism, the factors that make beliefs justified or unjustified (J-factors) must be, in some sense, internal to a subject. Not only that, a subject must have cognitive access to these J-factors. So, as Steup claims, those J-factors must be available to a subject on the basis of “reflection alone”.

By ‘reflection’, Steup means a priori reasoning, introspective awareness of one’s own mental states and one’s memory of knowledge acquired in each of these two ways.

Examples of J-factors that are available upon reflection: perceptual experiences; wishful thinking.

Examples of factors that are not available upon reflection: the reliability of the cognitive process that gives rise to one’s beliefs.

2. Deontology

Deontology is seen as the motivation for internalism. (Deontology is the study of duty and obligation.) The idea is that we model justification on the notion of moral responsibility. So, just like we have moral responsibilities, we have epistemic responsibilities. These responsibilities demand that a subject be able to recognize on the basis of reflection whether or not she is conforming to epistemic rules or duties. This is analogous to the notion of moral responsibility which demands that an agent be able to tell whether and when she is conforming to moral rules.

We can think of our epistemic end as: believe what is true; do not believe what is false.

We can think of our epistemic duties as: believe what is supported by evidence; do not believe what is not supported by evidence.

Justification, then, is a matter of fulfilling our epistemic duties.

A few points about evidence:

1. Whether a belief is supported by a piece of evidence will depend on context. What counts as evidence is context-dependent.

2. Evidence consists of both beliefs and experiential states such as sensory, introspective, memorial and intuitional states. These are all directly recognizable by a subject (so count as J-factors).

3. Challenges

(a) Gettier cases: internalism about justification is always consistent with cases where the satisfaction of the justification condition is not related to satisfaction of the truth condition. According to Steup, knowledge demands an externalist ‘degettierization’ condition.

Option: remember that reliabilism is externalist. And Steup accepts that the reliability of belief production is necessary for knowledge. But he suggests that reliability enter into the definition at the degettierization condition.

Note: such a degettierization condition does not contribute to justification, so Steup’s internalism remains just that—internalism. Knowledge might be, in an important sense, external. But justification remains internal.

(b) Whether a belief is recognizable is frequently not available to reflection. We often don’t keep track of our evidence for a certain belief; sometimes we are mistaken about the grounds upon which we hold a certain belief. Given this, that J-factors be cognitively accessible is too strong a requirement on justification.
Steup holds firm on this. He claims that it is part of the very meaning of ‘evidence’ that it be directly accessible to the subject. So, if some factors are not cognitively accessible, then they do not count as evidence (i.e., they do not count as J-factors).

Is this good enough?

(c) Deontological justification presupposes that we have control over what we believe. But many of our beliefs are involuntary. So, beliefs are not deontologically justified or unjustified.

Remember, Steup takes his internalism to be motivated by deontology. According to deontologism, for a subject to justifiably believe that \( p \), she should have the goal of believing what is true and should heed the demands of evidentialism (“Believe only what you have evidence for.”)

But, if this is true, we ought to have control over what we believe. We ought to be able to refrain from believing that \( p \). (Think of the analogous point about moral responsibility and coercion.)

Steup responds in two steps:

**Step one:** Deny that we are epistemically responsible for our beliefs only if we have control over what we believe.

**Step two:** Argue that there is a sense in which we have control over our justified beliefs.

Distinction: soft involuntariness and hard involuntariness

A belief that \( p \) is softly involuntary when, if one’s evidence were to change, one could refrain from believing that \( p \).

A belief that \( p \) is hardly involuntary (i.e., involuntary in a hard way) when one would hang onto a belief no matter what—i.e., when one is unable to react to a change in evidence.

According to Steup, most of our beliefs are only softly involuntary and deontologism is compatible with soft involuntarism.