Some Remarks on Chisholm's Epistemology

WILLIAM P. ALSTON

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Roderick Chisholm is outstanding among contemporary epistemologists for, *inter alia*, his probing scrutiny of the foundations of the discipline. Perhaps more than any other English-speaking philosopher of our time, he has persistently asked the basic questions as to what epistemology is about and as to the resources it can employ to do its job. And on the basis of this meta-epistemology, he has erected an impressive system of epistemological principles. The recent publication of the latest version of his system[1] provides an occasion for critical examination. This paper will be confined to problems about the internal coherence of Chisholm's system; I will not be discussing the truth, plausibility, or acceptability of his substantive principles.

I

Chisholm is not given to summary statements of his system. But when he comes closest to doing this, he represents the system as having a classical foundationalist structure. In setting out his methodology at the beginning of Chapter II, Chisholm writes:

> We consider certain things that we know to be true, or think we know to be true, or certain things which, upon reflection, we would be willing to call *evident*. With respect to each of these, we then try to formulate a reasonable answer to the question, "What justification do you have for thinking you know this thing to be true?" or "What justification do you have for counting this thing as something that is evident?"...

NOÛS 14 (1980)

> In many instances the answers to our questions will take the following form: "What justifies me in thinking I know that *a* is F is the fact that it is evident to me that *b* is G." For example: 'What justifies me in thinking I know that he has that disorder is the fact that it is evident to me that he has those symptoms." Such an answer, therefore, presupposes an epistemic principle, what we might call a "rule of evidence". The rule would have the form:
>
> If it is evident to me that *b* is G, then it is evident to me that *a* is F.
>
> . . . One could say of such a rule that it tells us that one thing *serves to make another thing evident.*
>
> This type of answer to our Socratic questions shifts the burden of justification from one claim to another. For we may now ask, "What justifies me in counting it as evident that *b* is G?" or "What justifies me in thinking I know that *b* is G?" And possibly we will formulate , once again, an answer of the first sort: "What justifies me in counting it as evident that *b* is G is the fact that it is evident that *c* is H.". . . And this answer will presuppose still another rule of evidence: "If it is evident that *c* is H, then it is evident that *b* is G." How long can we continue in this way?
>
> We might try to continue *ad indefinitum*, justifying each new claim that we elicit by still another claim. Or we might be tempted to complete a vicious circle: in such a case, having justified "*a* is F" by appeal to "*b* is G", and "*b* is G" by reference to "*c* is H", we would then justify "*c* is H" by reference to "*a* is F". But if we are rational beings, we will do neither of these things. For we will find that our Socratic questions lead us to a proper stopping place. . . Let us say provisionally that we have found a proper stopping place when the answer to our questions may take the following form:
>
> What justifies me in thinking I know that is F is simply the fact that *a* is F.
>
> Whenever this type of answer is appropriate, we have encountered what is *directly evident.* (pp. 17-20)

In this passage Chisholm is adumbrating a foundationalist epistemology of a classical type. Although some knowledge claims are justified by being based on other pieces of knowledge, if we push this chain of justification far enough back, we will encounter items of knowledge that have this status without deriving it from other items of knowledge. It is on these most basic knowings that the entire edifice rests. Chisholm's version of how a proposition can be evident "on its own" is that in such cases the proposition is evident for me just by being true (alternatively, it is the fact that makes it true that also makes it evident).[2] He also holds that the only *a posteriori*

propositions that satisfy this condition are those that attribute current conscious states to a person. Thus the position sketched is a classic foundationalism in which my knowledge of my own current states of consciousness is in need of no external support, while any other propositions that are evident to me derive that evidence from the former, by virtue of principles of the form:

> If it is evident to me that *b* is G, then it is evident to me that *a* is F.

However, the system that Chisholm actually presents is not at all like this. The principles that are advertised as laying down conditions for a proposition's being "indirectly evident"[3] are the following.[4]

(B) For any subject S, if S believes without ground for doubt, that he is perceiving something to be F, then it is beyond reasonable doubt for S that he perceives something to be F.

(C) For any subject S, if S believes, without ground for doubt, that he is perceiving something to be F, then it is evident for S that he perceives something to be F.

The predicates that may replace "F" in (C) & (E) are restricted to those connoting sensible characteristics.

(D) For any subject S, if S believes, without ground for doubt, that he remembers perceiving something to be F, then the proposition that he does remember perceiving something to be F is one that is acceptable for S.

(E) For any subject S, if S believes, without ground for doubt, that he remembers perceiving something to be F, then it is beyond reasonable doubt for S that he does remember perceiving something to be F.

(F) For any subject S, if S believes, without ground for doubt, that he remembers being F, then it is beyond reasonable doubt for S that he does remember that he was F.

The predicates that may replace "F" in (F) are restricted to those which would yield a description of a self-presenting state.[5]

(G) If the conjunction of all those propositions e, such that e is acceptable for S at t tends to confirm h, then h has some presumption in its favor for S at t.

(H) Any set of concurring propositions, each of which has some presumption in its favor for S, is such that each of its members is beyond reasonable doubt for S.

(I) If S believes, without ground for doubt, that he perceives something to be F, and if the proposition that there is something that is F is a member of a set of concurrent propositions each of which is beyond reasonable doubt for S, then it is evident for S that he perceives something to be F.

None of these principles are of the "transfer of evidence" form. None of them say that if a proposition with a certain kind of content is evident to a subject, S, then a proposition with a certain related sort of content will also thereby be evident for that subject. Hence, contrary to the expectations raised by the long passage quoted above, they do nothing toward enabling us to show how other propositions derive evidence from directly evident propositions. In fact, the only proposition in the list that has anything to do with a linear transfer of epistemic status is (G). And that has to do not with evidence, but with weaker forms of positive epistemic status; moreover it has no specific bearing on the transition from directly evident to indirectly evident propositions.

It may be claimed that there is a way in which principles (B) - (F) do represent other propositions as deriving their evidence, or other epistemic status, from the directly evident. For these principles all move from S's believing a certain proposition to that proposition's being evident for S. But, according to Chisholm, propositions about ones own beliefs are directly evident to one. (p. 21) Hence the consequent epistemic status in each of these principles derives from something directly evident, viz., a belief. But this would be an unwarranted reading of the situation for two reasons.

First, according to each of these principles, the derivative epistemic status accrues only if the proposition is believed *without ground for doubt, and Chisholm nowhere claims that it can be directly evident to me that I believe without grounds for doubt that* p. A glance at his definition of this phrase will assure us that he is well advised in refraining from any such claim.

> D4.3 S believes, without ground for doubt, that p = df. (i) S belives that p, and (ii) no conjunction of propositions that are acceptable for S tends to confirm the negation of the proposition that p. (p. 76)

It would be most implausible to suppose that the mere fact that both those conditions hold make it evident to me that they do. Surely it could be the case that no conjunction of propositions that is "acceptable" to me tends to confirm not-p, while I am quite in the dark as to whether this is the case. But if these considerations are sound, the total package that appears in the antecedents of these principles is not something that is directly evident to S.

A second, and perhaps even more crucial, consideration is this. Even with respect to the mere belief requirement, the principles do not require *that* the proposition that, e.g., *S believes that he is perceiving something to be F* be directly evident, but only that the proposition be true. That is, the principles do not represent the proposition that *S is perceiving something to be F* as deriving its justification from the fact that the belief proposition is directly evident, but merely from the fact of the belief. Indeed, (B) - (F) do not require any proposition to be directly evident. They might all be quite acceptable even if no proposition satisfies Chisholm's concept of direct evidence. Hence they do *not* lay down the direct evidence of certain propositions as a condition of the (indirect) evidence of other propositions.

Curiously enough, and despite the expectations generated by the long passage quoted at the beginning of this section, Chisholm evinces at least partial awareness of the point I have been making. Near the beginning of Chapter III, "The Indirectly Evident", he writes:

> What, then, of our justification for those propositions that are indirectly evident? We might say that they are justified in three different ways. (1) They may be justified by certain relations that they bear to what is *directly* evident. (2) They may be justified by certain relations that they bear to *each other*. And (3) they may be justified *by their own nature*, so to speak, and quite independently of the relations that they bear to anything else. (p. 63)

I have already suggested that none of Chisholm's principles provide for the first kind of justification. But, in any event, Chisholm's recognition of these different possibilities sorts ill with the earlier suggestion that all non-directly evident propositions derive their evidence from propositions that are directly evident.

How should we characterize the system constituted by Chisholm's principles? The principles are not extensive enough to permit a definitive answer, but I would like to make the point that these principles could form the matrix of a foundationalism, though not of the classical sort. Let us think of an epistemic foundation as any proposition that is epistemically justified in some way other than by its relation to other propositions that are justified for the same subject. Call any such proposition 'immediately justified'. Any immediately justified proposition is fitted to stop a regress of justification, and thus function as a foundation. With that understanding we can see that Chisholm's foundations include not only his "directly evident" propositions, but also the perception and memory propositions that, according to (B) - (F), become justified just by being believed without ground for doubt. And since Chisholm is taking perception and memory verbs with a "success" connotation, this means that propositions specifying what is perceived and remembered have the same status. Thus his foundations will include not only propositions about the subject's current conscious experiences, but also propositions about what the subject can perceive in the physical environment, as well as propositions about what he can remember of his perceptions and other experiences. Presumably other justified propositions are to derive their justification from the items in this widened base, though Chisholm only makes a beginning at specifying how this is to be done. Thus the system is naturally read as a foundationalism, though it is not one of the most classical sort, since, to mention only the most salient reason, the base includes physical object propositions for which there *could* be grounds for doubt, extending, presumably, up to conclusive grounds for rejection. Thus the foundations lack such classical features as infallibility, indubitability, and incorrigibility.

Chisholm's failure to be clear as to what he is up to is reflected in, and perhaps contributed to by, his confusing use of the "directly evident-indirectly evident" distinction. On page 2 he explains the notion of "thing's" being directly evident as follows:

> There are some things. . . which are evident to me and which are such that my evidence for those things does not consist in the fact that there are certain *other* things that are evident to me.

This is to equate direct evidence with what I have called "immediate justification". Chisholm is presumably thinking of the matter in this way when, as in the long passage quoted at the beginning of this section, he suggests that all other evident propositions derive their evidence from directly evident propositions. But then, as we have seen, many perceptual and memory judgments would count as directly evident, whereas Chisholm classifies them as "indirectly evident". This latter classification reflects the most central explanation of 'directly evident' in terms of truth-justification. On *that* explanation of the term, perceptual and memory judgments do not count as directly evident. But, as Chisholm fails to recognize, truth-justification is only one of the possible modes of immediate justification. Another possible mode is what we might call "defeasible self-warrant", the mode exhibited in principles (B) - (F) of those listed above. Saddling himself with incompatible criteria for the application of 'directly evident', it is no wonder that Chisholm fails to command a clear view of the character of his own system.

II

Thus far the charge against Chisholm does not appear to be a capital one. After all it is quite common for philosophers, and other theorists, to misconstrue what they are doing. The doing itself might be none the worse for it. But the trouble goes deeper than that. At crucial points in his epistemology Chisholm relies on the view that all other evident propositions derive their evidence from directly evident propositions. Since, as we have seen, his system of principles do not carry out any such program, his epistemology becomes seriously incoherent. Let's see how this works out for Chisholm's definition of knowledge.

Chisholm's version of the traditional definition of knowledge is as follows:

> S knows that h is true = df. h is true, S accepts h, and h is evident for S. (p. 102)

Since he recognizes the possibility of an evident proposition's being false, this leaves him vulnerable to the Gettier objections. It is not possible for me to enter onto a thorough

discussion of Chisholm's solution, why he prefers it to other solutions, and whether it does succeed in avoiding counter-examples. I must confine myself to showing that the solution does not jibe with the rest of the system, and that this lack of fit reflects Chisholm's ambivalence over whether all evident empirical propositions derive their evidence from directly evident propositions.

Chisholm feels that to avoid Gettier-like counter examples, we must utilize a concept of non-defective evidence. Roughly speaking, a proposition is non-defectively evident if the directly evident propositions that constitute the ultimate source of its evidence are such as not to confer evidence on any false proposition. The exact definition is:

D6.3 *h* is non-defectively evident for S = df. Either *h* is certain for S, or *h* is evident for S and is entailed by a conjunction of propositions each having for S a basis which is not a basis of any false proposition.[6] (p. 109)

"Basis" is defined as follows:

D6.1 *e* is a basis of *h* for *s* = df. *e* is self-presenting for S; and necessarily, if *e* is self-presenting for S, then *h* is evident for S. (p. 16)

A self-presenting proposition is what we might call a basic directly evident proposition. The definition of 'self-presenting' run:

D2.0 *h* is self-presenting for S at *t* = df. *h* is true at *t*; and necessarily if *h* is true at *t*, then *h* is evident for S at *t*.[7]

This is equivalent to the account we gave on page 566 of Chisholm's concept of a "directly evident" proposition. The term 'self-presenting' was introduced in the second edition as approximately equivalent to 'directly evident' in the first edition, and in passages carried over unchanged from the first and second edition. In the more finely articulated official account of the second edition, the term 'directly evident' comprises self-presenting propositions and obvious logical implications thereof. (p. 24).

The revised definition of knowledge is:

D6.4 *h* is know by S = df. *h* is accepted by S; *h* is true; and *h* is nondefectively evident for S.

Clearly, on this definition of 'know', I can know that p only if p has a basis for me, i.e., only if p derives its evidence from some (possibly conjunct) directly evident proposition. For p cannot have a basis that satisfies a certain further condition unless it has a basis. But, as we have seen, Chisholm's set of epistemic principles gives us no guidance in determining whether and how a certain non-directly evident proposition derives its evidence from directly evident propositions. The system contains no principle of the form suggested by the definition of 'basis', viz.:

> If e is self-presenting for S, then h is evident for S.

Nor does the system entail any such principles. It is surely a crippling defect of a system of epistemic principles that it provides no guidance for the application of the term 'know', as defined within the system. Chisholm's ambivalence about the character of his sytem has resulted in his thinking one way when developing his system of principles and another way when developing the definition of knowledge.

III

Next I want to turn to Chisholm's notion of a self-presenting proposition. Let's recall that it is defined as follows:

> h is self-presenting for S at t = df. h is true at t; and necessarily, if h is true at t, then h is evident for S at t. (p. 22)

In other words, a self-presenting proposition is a true proposition that is evident to the person just by virtue of being true. It is its truth that makes it evident; nothing further is required.

According to Chisholm, the propositions that are self-presenting to me are those that concern my current thoughts and experiences. This view is not without plausibility. To be sure, I feel that its plausibility stems from considerations of a sort Chisholm does not invoke, and, indeed, refrains on principle from invoking. We are strongly inclined to think that our conscious thoughts, beliefs, sensations, and so on are "automatically registered" in a maximally direct way, one that involves no possibly distorting intervening medium; or at least are registered in such a way that the possibilities for distortion are at a minimum. This thought has been traditionally expressed by saying that one is "directly aware" of his own thoughts and experiences, that they are "given to" or "pre-

sented to" his consciousness. Just because we are accustomed to think of the matter in this way we are receptive to Chisholm's suggestion that nothing but the truth of such a proposition is required to render it evident to the person in question. Indeed, I would go further and suggest that Chisholm's position depends for its acceptability on the assumption that beliefs about one's own current conscious states are formed by some highly reliable belief-forming mechanism. Be that as it may, I am prepared to take seriously Chisholm's version of the immediate justification of propositions about one's current thoughts and experiences.[8]

However, as pointed out in footnote 2, this explanation of 'self-presenting' is significantly different from the explanation of the term 'directly evident' that appears in the passage (from pp. 17-20) quoted at the beginning of this paper. There, after citing the formula "What justifies me in thinking I know that *a* is F is simply the fact that *a* is F", Chisholm says:

> Whenever this type of answer is appropriate, we have encountered what is *directly evident*.

Of course if Chisholm intended to be using these terms for different concepts there would be no problem. But the passage just cited, and others we shall be citing, were carried over unchanged from the first edition, where the term 'directly evident' plays the role officially assigned to 'self-presenting' in the second edition. To avoid further confusion, I shall henceforth follow Chisholm's later terminology and restrict myself to the term 'self-presenting', though I will still be quoting passages in which Chisholm uses the term 'directly evident' in the old way.

To return to the matter at hand, the two explanations differ in the way in which the justificatory role of the truth of the proposition (or of the fact that makes the proposition true) is specified. More specifically, in the definition of 'self-presenting', what the truth of *p* does is to render evident the proposition that *p*. Whereas in the passage from pages 17-20, what the truth of *p* does is to justify the higher level epistemic proposition that *S knows that p*, or that *it is evident to S that p*. According to the definition, what makes a true proposition, *p*, self-presenting for S is that its truth renders *it* evident for S, whereas according to the other account what makes *p* self-presenting for S is that its truth justifies S's higher level belief that S knows that *p* (or that it is evident to S that *p*).[9] Let's term

the definition of 'self-presenting' the "lower level" account, and the explanation of 'directly evident' (from pp. 17-20) the "higher level" account.

The higher-level approach is by no means confined to Chisholm's introduction of the concept. On the contrary, it is mixed in with the lower-level way throughout Chisholm's discussion. Whenever he considers whether some particular kind of proposition can be self-presenting he has recourse to the higher-level test. For example:

> Thinking and believing provide us with paradigm cases of the directly evident. Consider a reasonable man who is thinking about a city he takes to be Albuquerque, or who believes that Albuquerque is in New Mexico, and suppose him to reflect on the philosophical question, "What is my justification for thinking that I know that I am thinking about a city I take to be Albuquerque, or that I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico?"... The man could reply in this way: "My justification for thinking I know that I am thinking about a city I take to be Albuquerque, or that I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico, is simply the fact that I *am* thinking about a city I take to be Albuquerque, or that I do believe that it is in New Mexico." And this reply fits our formula for the directly evident:
>
> What justifies me in thinking I know that *a* is F is simply the fact that *a* is F. (p. 22)

Spurious candidates are put to the same test. In arguing that statements that "formulate our 'perception'" do not count as self-presenting. Chisholm says:

> A reasonable man will *not* say, "What justifies me in counting it as evident that I see Mr. Smith is simply the fact that I do see Mr. Smith." (p. 21)

In fact the higher-level formulation dominates the discussion in Chapter II. But we also find the lower-level approach popping up from time to time, sometimes in close proximity to the other. Thus, just after the passage about Albuquerque quoted above, we find Chisholm saying: "Our man has stated his justification for a proposition merely by reiterating that proposition." This remark is not literally appropriate to what preceded it. For what was said to be justified was the higher-level epistemic proposition *I know that I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico*. While what was said to "state" the justification was rather "I *do* believe that it is in New Mexico." The man has *not* reiterated the propositon for which he is claiming to state the justification. Here Chisholm is obviously switching to the

lower-level construal embodied in his definition. The man can have been stating his justification for a proposition by reiterating it only if the proposition to be justified was the lower-level proposition that *I believe that Albuquerque is in New Mexico*.

Is there anything objectionable in Chisholm's presenting the concept in these two distinct ways? If they were both intended as a definition Chisholm would clearly be at fault. But although the introductory higher-level explanation of "directly evident" looks for all the world like an informal definition, still, taking the chapter as a whole, we are bound to give pride of place to the author's explicit definitions. We can then take the "higher-level" presentation as simply expressing Chisholm's conviction that

(L) Whenever p is self-presenting for S, in the defined sense, the fact that p will also justify S in thinking that he knows that p, or that p is evident to S.

If the latter is a universal characteristic of self-presenting propositions it can be used to identify them, even if it is not strictly definitory.

If that is the way the land lies (or is being ruled to lie) we must go on to ask what reason Chisholm has for accepting (L). It is tempting to suppose that Chisholm is just confusing or not clearly distinguishing the level-distinct propositions p and *it is evident to S that* p;[10] this would account for his not distinguishing their justifications. If so, this would be but one example of the level confusions (confusion of propositions, questions, concepts, issues at different epistemic levels) which are rife in epistemology.[11]

But we will not charge Chisholm with confusion unless we are unable to find any reason for (L) within his system. Is there a reason? He does not explicitly present any reason, for he never explicitly formulates (L). But he does propound certain level-briding principles that may seem to imply (L), or at least constitute strong ground for it. It will not have escaped the reader's notice that (L) would be congenial to any adherent of the so-called "KK thesis," according to which it is impossible to know that p without knowing that one knows that p. This well-known view, which has many proponents as well as many detractors, may seem to imply that when one knows that p, whatever justifies one in believing that p will *ipso facto* justify one in believing that one knows that p (on the assumption that knowledge requires justification). For if knowing that p is

sufficient in itself for knowing that I know that p, then it would seem that the justification that is involved in knowing that p would be all that is required for knowing that I know that p.

Chisholm does not assert anything as strong as the KK thesis. He recognizes that the thesis founders on the following difficulty.

> We have emphasized that a proposition cannot be evident to a person unless the person understands the proposition. Now it is possible that there is a person who does not yet have the concept of evidence or of knowledge, but for whom, all the same, a certain proposition is known. Such a person, then, would be one for whom it would not be evident that anything is know and evident.[12] Therefore a proposition may be evident without it being evident that it is evident, and a proposition may be known without it being known that it is known. (p. 114)

But Chisholm does embrace somewhat weaker level-bridging principles:

> . . . if a proposition is evident and if one *considers* the proposition, then it is evident that the proposition is evident.[13] (p. 114)

(K1) If S considers the proposition that he knows that p, and if it is evident to S that p, then it is evident to S that he knows that p. (p. 114)

(K4) If S considers the proposition that he knows that p, and if he does know that p, then he knows that he knows that p. (p. 116)

Those formulations take care of the difficulty exposed above. I cannot satisfy the requirement that I consider the proposition that I know that p (or that it is evident to me that p) without understanding the proposition and so without having the concept of knowledge or evidence.

I find Chisholm's arguments for (K4) extremely obscure, but I will not have time to go into that here. Instead, waiving any doubts about (K4) and the other two principles, I shall simply consider whether they do imply, or furnish strong ground for, (L). It is the first, unnumbered, principle that is most directly relevant to (L); call it (KO). For (KO) provides explicitly for a transfer of evidence to a higher level. Now clearly KO does not *entail* (L). It guarantees us that if p is evident for me, and if I consider the higher-level proposition that *p is evident for me*, then that higher-level proposition will be evident to me. But it says nothing about *what* renders the latter evident for me. It merely lays it down that, under those condi-

tions, *something* will do so. Hence it does not imply that this something will be the same something that makes *p* evident. But does (KO) provide a strong ground for (L)? After all, even the strong KK thesis does not strictly entail (L). It entails that whenever I know that *p* it will, inevitably, be evident to me that I know that *p*. But this is compatible with the view that what makes it evident that I know that *p* is something different from what makes it evident that *p*. However, the KK thesis does, I believe, provide a strong basis for (L). For if it is *impossible* that I should know that *p* without its being evident to me that I know that *p*, then if what makes the latter evident is something different from what makes it evident that *p*, my knowing that *p* would have to *render it necessary* that the different justification for the higher-level proposition is present. And of what different justification could that be true? It seems much more reasonable to suppose that one's knowledge that *p* can necessitate knowledge that one knows that *p*, only because nothing is required to render the higher-level proposition evident over and above what renders the lower-level proposition evident.

But we cannot mount an analogous argument from (KO) to (L). Here we are not at a loss to see how E (It is evident to me that I feel relieved) might be justified differently from M (I feel relieved). This is due to the fact that on (KO), unlike (KK), there is no guaranteed automatic transition from the truth of the higher-level proposition to its being evident or known. On (KO), it is not the case that when it is evident to me that M, it is *ipso facto* evident to me that E. There is also the additional requirement that I consider E. Hence there is not the same constraint to suppose that nothing additional is required to *make* E evident over and above what makes it evident that M.[14] Furthermore that additional requirement carries a suggestion as to what might be required to make it evident that E. May it not be that in considering the proposition that E I thereby *acquire* evidence for it that I would not have had otherwise, perhaps in the form of a recognition that M is the kind of proposition it is (a self-presenting one), or in the form of an awareness that my epistemic condition is one of M's being evident to me?

Not only does Chisholm lack adequate reasons for (L). The principle is implausible. Consider how Chisholm explains the higher-level proposition that *it is evident to me that p*, and then consider whether the fact that *p* (where *p* is a self-presenting proposition) could justify one in believing *that*. According to Chisholm's definition of "evident," in taking it to

be evident to me that p, I am supposing that (1) p is beyond reasonable doubt for me, and (2) for any proposition, q, if accepting q is more reasonable for me than accepting p, then q is certain for me (p. 12). p is beyond reasonable doubt for me if and only if accepting p is more reasonable for me than is withholding p (neither accepting nor rejecting it) (p. 7). And p is certain for me if and only if p is beyond reasonable doubt for me and there is no q such that accepting q is more reasonable for me than accepting p (p. 10). Putting all this together, to say that p is evident for me is to say that (1) it is more reasonable for me to accept p then to remain on the fence, and (2) the only proposition that it could be more reasonable for me to accept than p would be one that has the maximum degree of reasonableness.

It would seem that propositions of neither form (1) nor form (2) could be justified by, e.g., the fact that I feel depressed or the fact that I am thinking about my lawn. (1) is an epistemic evaluation and, like any evaluation, it involves the application of standards. In deeming it more reasonable to accept than to "withhold" p, I am supposing that there is some *valid* standard or rule of (epistemic) acceptability the application of which to the present case would reveal acceptance to be more reasonable than remaining on the fence. In order to be *justified* in believing (1), I would have to be justified in believing that there is some such valid standard. And how in the world could the mere fact that I am thinking about Albuquerque, being "appeared to redly," or want a glass a water, give me any such reason? I am *not* supposing that in order to be justified in an epistemic evaluation one has to have consciously rehearsed an adequate set of reasons for accepting certain epistemic standards and for applying them in a certain way. I am even prepared to allow that one may be justified in an evaluation without being *able* to formulate such reasons. A realistic theory of epistemic justification would allow for much or all of the required reasons to be possessed "implicitly" in varying degrees. Nevertheless I would still maintain that at however implicit a level, one must "have" reasons of the sort mentioned if one is to be justified in any kind of evaluation. And it seems clear that just being appeared to redly or wanting a glass of water is not sufficient to put one in possession, of however implicit a sort, of such reasons.

It seems even more obvious that the mere fact that p cannot justify one's acceptance of (2). How can the fact that I am thinking about Albuquerque justify me in supposing that

the corresponding proposition is *at least as reasonable for me to believe as any other proposition except what is certain*? In order to be justified in this extravagant claim I will have to have some knowledge about the range of propositions available for belief, and their epistemic statuses for me. Unless I have, at some level of explicitness, conducted such a survey, or at least unless I am in possession of what would result from such a survey, how could I be justified in any comparison of my epistemic situation vis-à-vis p with my epistemic situation vis-à-vis all other propositions? And it looks as obvious as anything can be that the mere fact that I am being appeared to redly, or that I want a glass of water, will not put me in possession of such wide-ranging knowledge. If it did, the humblest thirster after drink would be a master of epistemology.

The upshot of this section is the following. Chisholm claims, with respect to a self-presenting proposition, p, that the truth of p renders evident both p (as required by the explicit definition of 'self-presenting'), *and* the higher level propositions, *S knows that* p, and *it is evident to S that* p. Whether these claims to higher-level truth justification stem from a confusion of levels, or from the tacit assumption of (L), in either case, these claims constitute an unfortunate excresence on the system. For whereas it is not implausible that, in the cases Chisholm regards as self-presenting, p is made evident by the truth of p, it is highly implausible that the correlated higher-level propositions are rendered evident by the truth of p; nor does Chisholm do anything to counterbalance this initial implausibility. Hence he is best advised to lop off the higher-level claims and restrict himself to the thesis that, in the cases in question, the truth of p makes it evident that p. This will give him everything he needs. It will give him propositions that are made evident by something other than the evidence of other propositions, and that thereby serve to stop the regress of justification. It will give him propositions that cannot be true without being evident. He can still maintain his level-bridging principles (KO)-(K4). The only thing that might seem to be lost is his "Socratic" procedure of uncovering cases of evidence by asking "What justification do you have for counting this thing as something that is evident?" (p. 18) For we will uncover self-presenting propositions by answering *these* questions only if for a self-presenting proposition p, the truth of p suffices to justify one in thinking that it is evident to him that p. But on the more austere regime I am recommending, Chisholm need not forswear his Socratic ways; it will

suffice to reformulate the questions in a lower key. Instead of asking "What justification do I have for thinking that it is evident to me that *p*?" he can use the lower-level analogue, "What justification do I have for thinking that *p*?" The character of the methodology will not have been altered.

IV

Finally let's turn to the general question of what *can* be a source of evidence, what the viable candidates are. In line with my concentration on internal criticism, I shall not question the particular sources chosen by Chisholm, but rather consider the most general constraints he places on candidates, and then determine the extent to which he has actually observed these constraints in working out his scheme.

At the beginning of Chapter 4, "The Indirectly Evident", shortly after the passage, discussed in section I, in which Chisholm lists the three kinds of justification of which indirectly evident propositions are susceptible, he goes on to make a particularly revealing remark.

> But aren't we overlooking the most obvious type of epistemic justification? Thus one might object: "the best justification we could have for a given proposition would be the fact that it comes from a *reliable source*. What could be more reasonable than accepting the deliverances of such a source—whether the source be an authority, or a computer, or a sense-organ, or some kind of psychological faculty, or science itself?" The answer is, of course, that it is reasonable to put one's faith in a source which is such that one knows it to be reliable or one has good *ground* or *reason* or *evidence* for thinking it to be reliable. In investigating the theory of knowledge, we are concerned with the nature of the ground or reason or evidence that one might thus have for believing a source or an authority to be a reliable one. (pp. 63-4)

I call this passage "revealing" because in it Chisholm seems to be applying a general requirement for justifiers. Let's try to disengage it.

But first let's remind ourselves of where this issue fits into the current scene in epistemology. Chisholm is undoubtedly directing these remarks at "reliability" accounts of knowledge.[15] Very roughly, according to such accounts, whether a true belief counts as knowledge depends on the circumstances of its origination and or preservation, on whether it was produced or is sustained in such a way as to be reliable. On this view, if a belief was produced by a reliable psychological mechanism, that makes it reasonable to accept this belief,

whether or not the believer knows or has reason to believe *that* the mechanism is reliable.[16] To this Chisholm responds that it is *reasonable* to accept beliefs from a source only if one knows it to be reliable, or has reasons to suppose it to be.

What general requirement for justifiers lies behind what Chisholm says here? To answer that question we will have to make the position somewhat more explicit. Is it that, in these cases, what justifies me in believing that *p* is not that the source is reliable but rather that I know, or am justified in believing, that the source is reliable? Keeping in mind that to say the source is reliable is to say that beliefs that issue therefrom are at least highly likely to be true, we may generalize this reading of the position into the following requirement for justifiers.

I. A state of affairs, A, justifies S's belief that *p* only if A is of the form—S knows (is justified in believing) of some state of affairs, B, that (1) B obtains, and that (2) B's obtaining renders it at least highly likely that it is true that *p*.

But this principle cannot be accepted by Chisholm. For, to leave aside other considerations, it would imply that a belief of S's can be justified only by the fact that S knows, or is justified in believing, something else. And that would imply that there are no self-presenting propositions. Indeed it would wash out the justification of perceptual and memory beliefs in accordance with principles (B)-(F).

But perhaps the trouble with I, is that it misconstrues the necessity for higher-level knowledge or justified belief. It takes this to imply that it is, in every case, the higher level cognition that *does* the justifying. But why shouldn't we say instead that it is the state of affairs, B, (the one that makes it at least highly likely that *p*) that *does* the justifying, *on condition that* S knows that it obtains and has the right relationship to *p*. The role of the higher-level knowledge would not be to do the justifying, but rather to ensure that the state of affairs concerning which we know this would do the justifying. This suggests the following version of the requirement.

II. A state of affairs, A, justifies S's belief that *p* only if S knows (is justified in believing) that (1) A obtains, and (2) A's obtaining renders it at least highly likely that it is true that *p*.

Principles like II, are widely held by epistemologists.[17]

We are encouraged to suppose that Chisholm holds it by his assertion that "we can know what it is, on any occasion, that constitutes our grounds, or reason, or evidence for thinking that we know" (p. 1). Leaving aside the fact that this quote has to do with grounds for higher level epistemic belief, the suggestion is that ones epistemic condition is readily accessible, on reflection, to oneself. From this it is but a short step to II.

I shall not be considering whether II, is acceptable. In line with the restriction to internal criticism, I shall be asking only whether the principles Chisholm actually lays down conform to this restriction.

This question can be divided in accordance with the two items of knowledge (or justified belief) required by the principle: (1) that S knows that the alleged justifier obtains, and (2) that S know that the alleged justifier is suited for the job. I shall limit myself to (1). If, as I shall argue, it is often not the case that S knows, or is justified in believing, that A obtains when, according to his principles, it is a justifier, there is no need to investigate whether S will always know that A is fitted for the job.

First consider self-presenting propositions. Here the system guarantees compliance with II. For here the alleged justifier of the belief that p is simply the fact that p. And by the very definition of "self-presenting," if p is self-presenting to S, it is evident to S that p. Here the justificate cannot fail to be justified in believing that the alleged justifier obtains.[18] When we turn to justifiers for the "indirectly evident" the situation is more complicated. Look back at the list of principles on page 567-568.[19] What does the system guarantee with respect to these alleged justifiers? The first thing to note is that in most of these principles part of the justifier consists in S's believing that p, where the belief that p is the one to be justified. Now Chisholm considers true propositions to the effect that S currently has a certain belief to be self-presenting; hence where this part of the justifier obtains it could not fail to be directly evident to S that it does obtain.

However, none of these principles take the mere fact that S believes that p to be sufficient to justify the belief. First consider the qualification "without grounds for doubt" that is placed on the belief condition wherever it occurs. As was pointed out in section I, it is entirely possible that one should lack grounds for doubting a certain proposition without knowing or being justified in believing that one had no

grounds for doubt. Hence the mere fact that we do believe p without grounds for doubt cannot, consistently with II., suffice to justify us in believing that p, for any p.

Second, (H) and (I) introduce the additional notion of a set of concurrent propositions. I do not think it to be taking an unduly pessimistic view of human capacities to suggest that is quite possible for a person, S, to "have" a set of propositions each of which has some presumption in its favor for S, and which satisfies the definition of a concurrent set (each being supported by the conjunction of the rest), without S's realizing this or even being justified in believing it. In fact it seems quite possible for there to be such a set even though S lacks the concepts of "tends to confirm" and "concurring"—lacks the concepts, not just technical terms for the concepts. And even if I have the concepts I might be mistaken about the status of such a set because I have not got the logical relations straight. Nor can I see anything in Chisholm's system to suggest the opposite.

Thus, of the justifiers Chisholm recognizes for "indirectly evident" propositions, only the belief component satisfies II. And that is not claimed to be sufficient by itself in any instance. Hence Chisholm's principles, with the exception of the one for self-presenting propositions, fare no better in the face of the criticism on page 581 than the "reliable source" view he is criticizing. Different epistemologists will draw different morals from this story. To me it indicates that it is self-defeating to restrict justifiers to facts that are known by, or evident to, the believer. That restriction will wash out practically all the plausible candidates, not just those of some particular position. We must take seriously the distinction between what does justify or render evident S's belief that p, and what higher-level knowledge or justified belief S has of that justification. A profound lesson for epistemology is to be found here.

NOTES

[1]*Theory of Knowledge*, second edition (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

[2]This is not precisely what Chisholm says in the above quotation. Section III will be devoted to sorting out the different characterizations Chisholm gives of the directly evident. Anticipating the discussion, I offer the formulation just given as embodying Chisholm's best thought on the subject.

[3]For the moment, let's just take 'indirectly evident' to mean 'evident without being directly evident'.

[4]The principles are introduced and discussed in Chapter IV, "The Indirectly Evident." They are listed sequentially in the Appendix, pp. 139-40.

To fully explain these principles to one unfamiliar with the book I would have to go into Chisholm's rather complicated system of definitions. For the present let the following suffice: "Having some presumption in its favor," "being acceptable," "being beyond reasonable doubt," and "being evident" are grades of favorable epistemic status (degrees of being justified), in ascending order. A set of propositions is "concurring" when each is supported by the conjunction of the rest.

[5]If a state is "self-presenting", a proposition ascribing such a state to myself will, if true, be directly evident. See section III for more on this terminology.

[6]Since, for Chisholm, only *a priori* and directly evident propositions are certain, we may ignore the first disjunct of the definiens. Why doesn't the second conjunct simply read "has a basis for S which is not a basis of any false proposition?" As Chisholm explains on pp. 109-10, there are, he believes, conjunctions that he will want to say are known, and hence non-defectively evident, which confer evidence on something false (and hence the basis of which will, through the conjunction, confer evidence on something false), but which are such that none of the individual conjuncts confer evidence on any false proposition. This formulation will let in such cases; the conjunction is entailed by a conjunction (viz., itself) of propositions, each having for S a basis which is not a basis of any false proposition. In the more usual case where the simpler formulation suffices, the non-defectively evident proposition can be taken as a limiting case of a conjunction with one conjunct.

[7]Chisholm also presents a parallel definition in which it is states of affairs rather than propositions that are said to be self-presenting. The difference between these two forms has no bearing on any of the issues we will be discussing. I shall restrict myself to the propositional form.

[8]For some criticism of this, see Part IIIC of my article, "Self-Warrant: A Neglected Form of Privileged Access," *Amer. Phil. Quart.*, Vol. 13 No. 4(Oct., 1976): 257-72.

[9]Another contrast exhibited here is that between rendering *p evident* and *justifying* the belief that S knows that *p*. Now these terms are presumably not equivalent for Chisholm. I say "presumably" because although Chisholm defines a sizeable number of terms for epistemic statuses of propositions, "justified" is not among them. My impression is that he uses "justified" when he wants to talk about a positive epistemic status without committing himself as to its exact degree. In any event, I do not believe that Chisholm meant to make anything out of this terminological contrast. Indeed, as we shall see later, his principles commit him to holding that whenever it is evident to S that *p* then, if he considers the matter, it will be evident to him that it is evident to him that *p*. No leakage of evidential force occurs in moving to the higher level. Hence I shall ignore this terminological difference.

[10]For a clear case of this sort of confusion see Panayot Butchvarov, *The Concept of Knowledge* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern U. Press, 1979): Pt. I, sec. 6.

[11]For some examples see my "The Justification of Perceptual Beliefs" and, especially, my "Level-Confusions in Epistemology," unpublished, *Midwest Stud., Phil., V* (1980).

[12]Since, for Chisholm, S's knowing that *p* requires *p*'s being evident for S, this will further imply that such a person could not know that anything was known and evident.

[13]The context makes it clear that the proposition one is required to consider is, contrary to the natural reading of the passage, the higher-level proposition that the lower-level proposition is evident, rather than the lower-level proposition itself.

[14]Gilbert Harman has pointed out to me (private communication) that on the assumption that KO is to be interpreted as asserting a necessary connection (Chisholm did not so formulate it), a proof can be constructed for the conclusion that, where E is true and evident to me on consideration, it is directly evident to me. This is because the conjunction *M, and I consider the proposition that M* is, when true, self-presenting. Hence the first conjunct will be directly evident. (According to Chisholm's later definition of "directly evident," the directly evident consists, roughly speaking, of obvious consequences of the self-presenting.) However, this still does nothing to show that *what makes* E evident is the truth of M.

[15]Alvin I. Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *Journ. Philos.*, LXXIII, No. 20(Nov. 18, 1976):771-91; D.M. Armstrong, *Belief, Truth and Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge U. Press, 1973): Pt. III; Fred Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969): Ch. 2; "Conclusive Reasons," *Austral. Journ. Philos.*, Vol. 49, No. 1(May, 1971): 1-22.

[16]On this point, see particularly the two works by Dretske, though he does not use the "reliable mechanism" lingo.

[17]Elsewhere I have explored some of the entanglements of this kind of principle with other positions in epistemology and meta-epistemology. See my "Meta-Ethics and Meta-Epistemology" in *Values and Morals*, ed. A. I. Goldman & J. Kim (Dordrecht: Holland, D. Reidel Pub. Co., 1978).

[18]One might suppose that an even stronger statement can be made, viz., that in Chisholm's system no proposition that is self-presenting for S can, if true, fail to be known by S. But that is *not* guaranteed by the system. Knowledge requires not only truth and evidence but also acceptance and non-defective evidence. (See the definition of knowledge on p. 110) Chisholm *does* regard all self-presenting propositions to be non-defectively evident; the slippage comes with the other requirement. The system does not require that every proposition that is evident to S, or even every proposition that is self-presenting to S, be accepted by S. (This makes the term "self-presenting" less than felicitous.) Even though it's staring me in the face I might fail to note it.

Lest it appear that Chisholm is getting away with something in rigging his definitions so as to ensure that what justifies self-presenting proposition cannot fail to be evident to S, let's recall that it is still a substantive question whether there are any propositions that are self-presenting in this sense.

[19]It is clear that Chisholm intends the antecendents of principles (B)-(I) to specify *sources* of the favorable epistemic status specified in the consequents of the principles, and hence that he intends these antecedents to be specifying "justifiers", as I have been using that term. See, e.g., pp. 17, 62-4, 76, 78, 95.