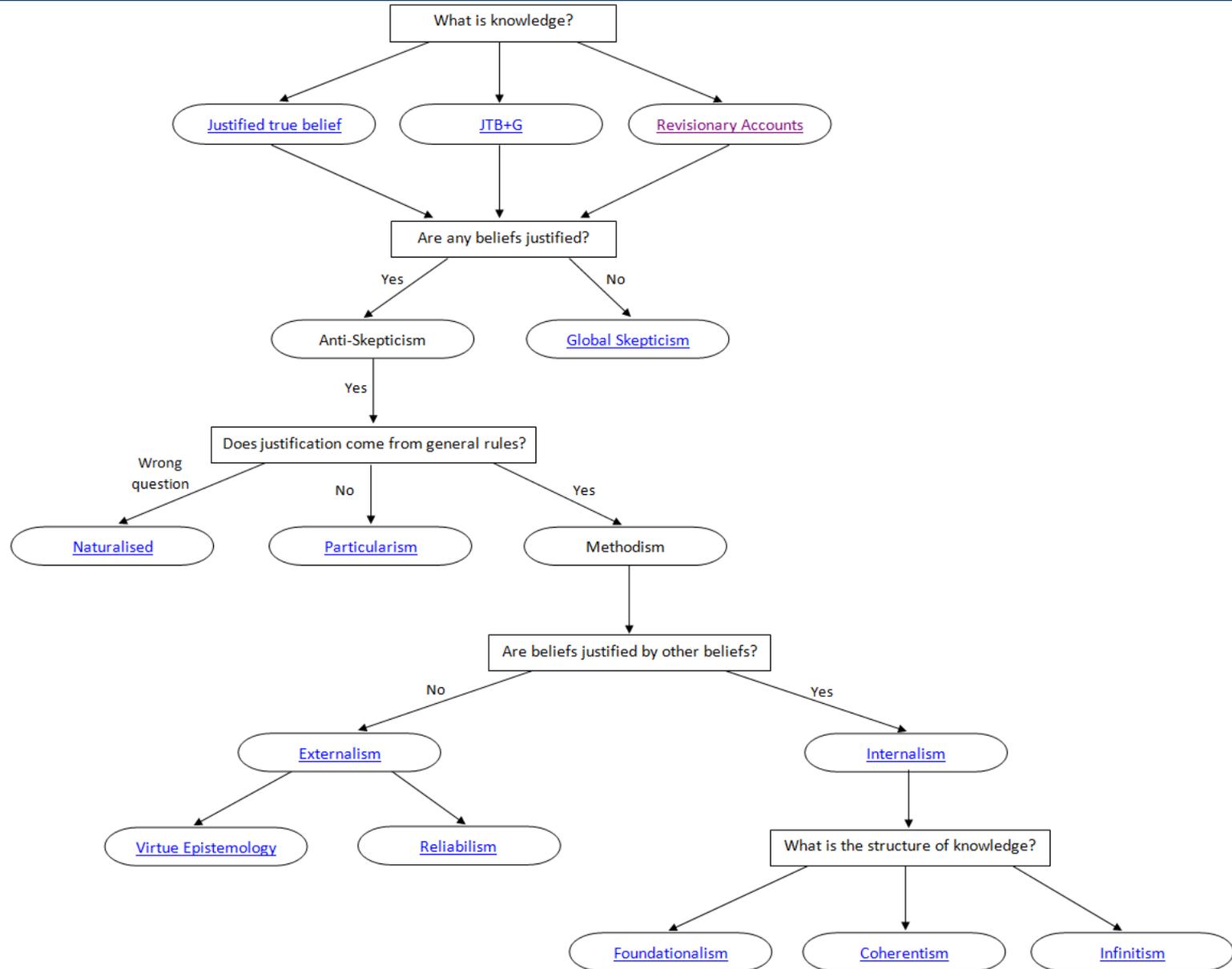




How Are Beliefs Justified?

James Fodor, April 2021

Outline of Epistemology



Internalism vs Externalism

- These views address the question of what is needed in order for a belief to be justified.
- **Internalism:** justification is something mental that you can (at least potentially) be aware of.
- **Externalism:** justification is something extra-mental that you need not have any awareness of.

Internalism

- One has a justified belief in p only if one can become aware by reflection of all one's justifiers for p .
- Requirement for **introspective access** to the source of justification.

Externalism/Reliabilism

- One has a justified belief in p only if that belief is caused by a reliable belief-forming process.
- Can have justification despite **no internal access** to the source of justification.

Arguments for Internalism

- **Reasons:** to be justified in a belief is to have a good reason for holding it.
- **Deontology:** justification is a matter of fulfilling one's intellectual duties, which is an internal matter.
- **New Evil Demon:** if you are in the matrix, are you unjustified in your beliefs about the world?
- **BonJour's Norman:** a clairvoyant is not justified in their beliefs unless they know they are clairvoyant.
- **My view:** the purpose of justification is that it is easier to check than truth.

Responses from Externalists

- **Reasons:** deny this principle.
- **Deontology:** deny that belief formation is deontological. It's our relationship to the world.
- **New Evil Demon:** doesn't matter, it's what is reliable in our world.
- **BonJour's Norman:** clairvoyance isn't a real process that can reliably cause beliefs.

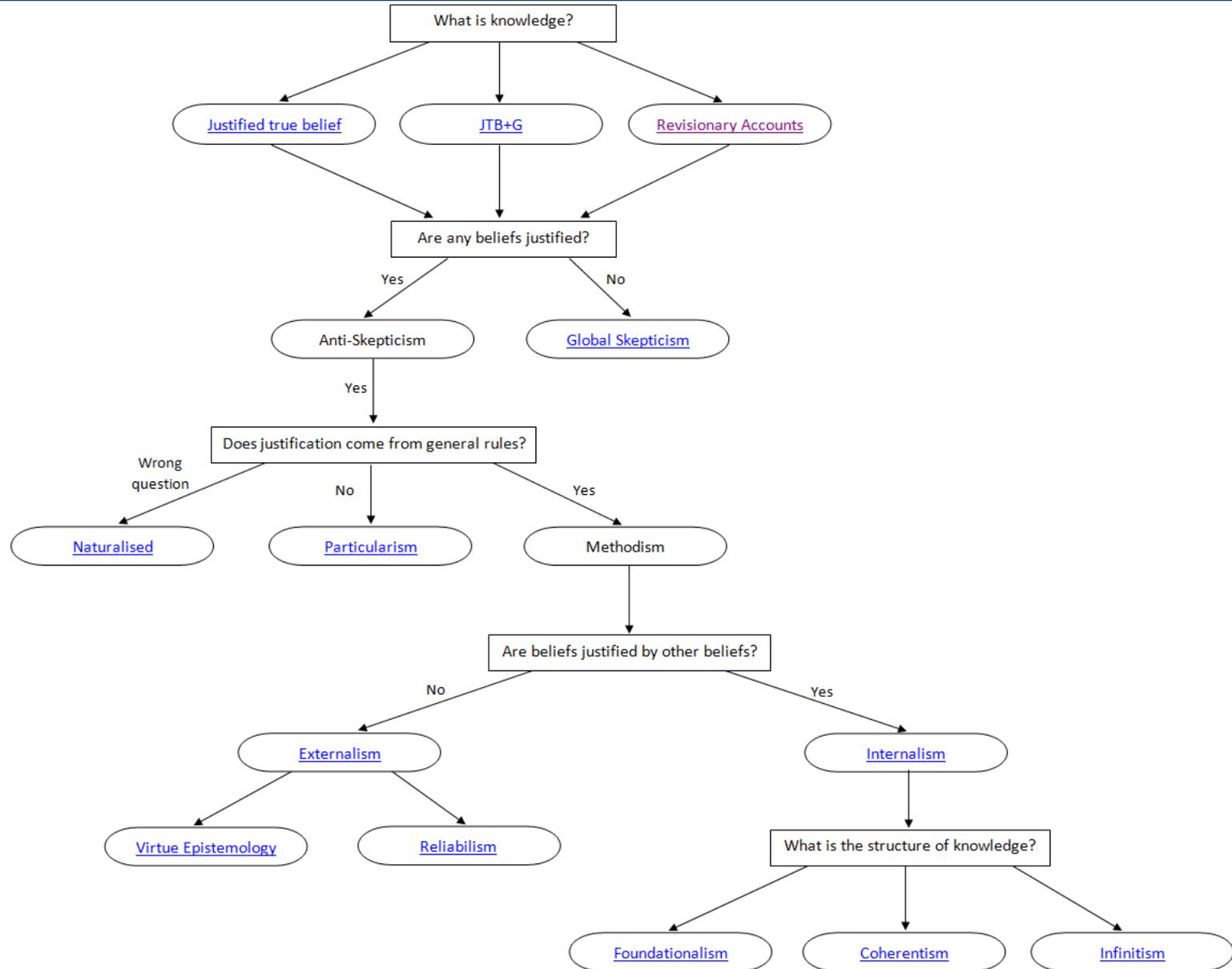
Arguments for Externalism

- **Truth Tracking:** the objective likelihood of a belief depends on how well the evidence tracks the truth (litmus paper example).
- **Children and Animals:** agents can have justified beliefs even without any access to the justification.
- **Chicken Sexers:** some judgements may be very reliable even though we don't know how or why.
- **Skeptical Defence:** relying on belief states for justification opens one to skeptical concerns. This is avoided if a belief is caused by facts that make it true.

Responses from Internalists

- **Truth Tracking:** all justifications need to be truth-tracking; externalism doesn't do a better job on this.
- **Children and Animals:** they do have internal justification, just not about to articulate it.
- **Chicken Sexers:** almost certainly do have internal justification – how else do they make the decision?
- **Skeptical Defence:** there are better responses to skepticism, such as appealing to abduction.

Outline of Epistemology



The Münchhausen Trilemma

- The Münchhausen trilemma asserts that there are only three ways of justifying a claim:
- **A dogmatic argument (foundationalism):** the proof ultimately rests on a claim with no further proof.
- **A circular argument (coherentism):** the proof is ultimately supported by that very same claim.
- **A regressive argument (infinetism):** the proof requires a further proof, ad infinitum.

Foundationalism

- Some beliefs are properly basic, or otherwise do not need any support outside themselves.
- **Stopping point:** ends the regress problem by providing a stopping point.
- **Intuitiveness:** some beliefs seem to not need any further support (e.g. 'black is not white', '1+1=2')
- **Phenomenal Conservatism:** if it seems to me that p then, absent defeaters, I have some justification for believing p.
- **Alternatives Unclear:** coherentism and infinitism are less clear and plausible than foundationalism.

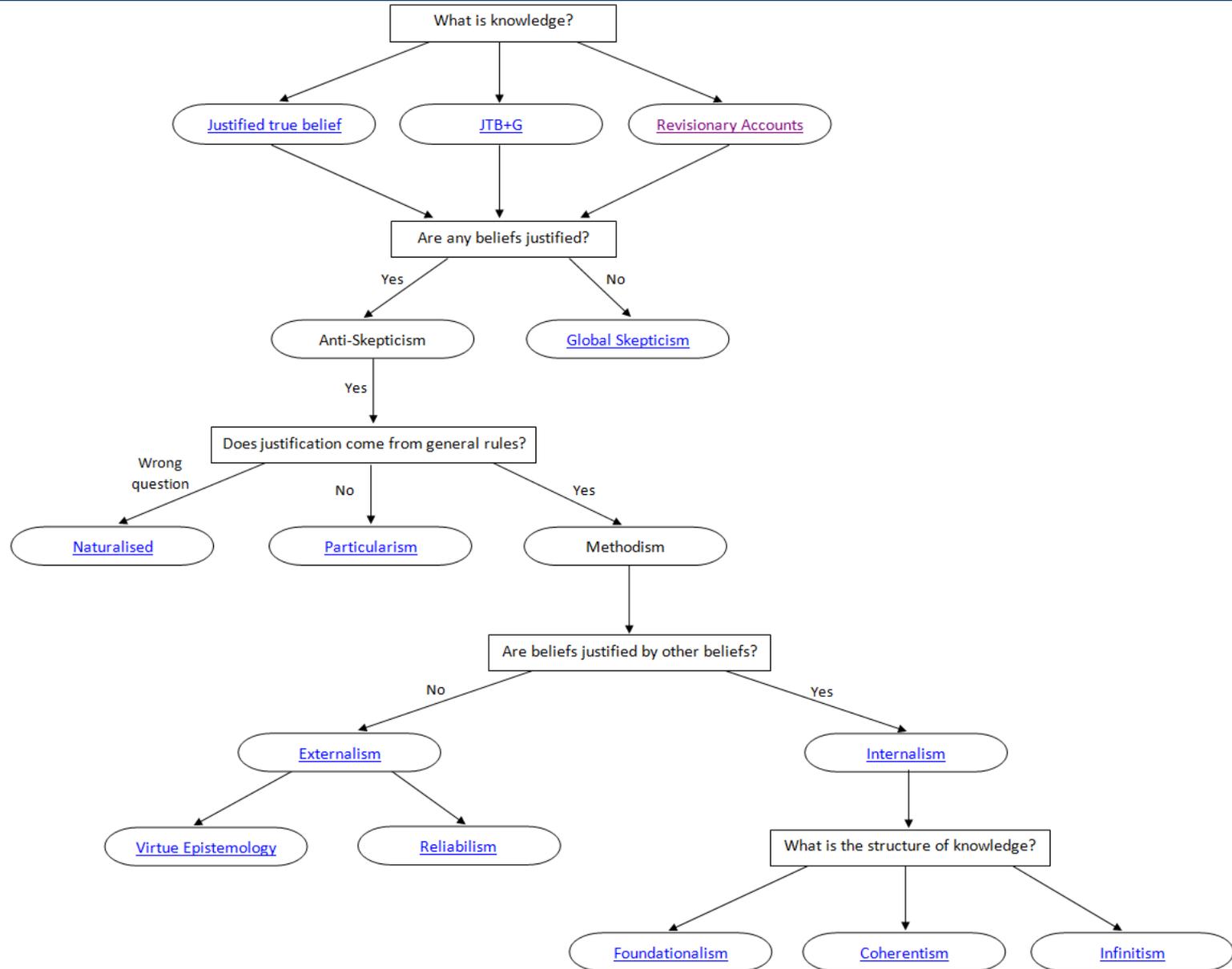
Coherentism

- A belief is justified when it is part of a coherent system of beliefs.
- **Background Beliefs:** all beliefs are only ever justified with respect to a large set of background beliefs.
- **Increased Congruence:** more independent sources of evidence increase the justification of a belief.
- **Avoids Arbitrariness:** no need for 'arbitrary' stopping points.
- **BUT:** problem of multiple equally-coherent systems of belief.

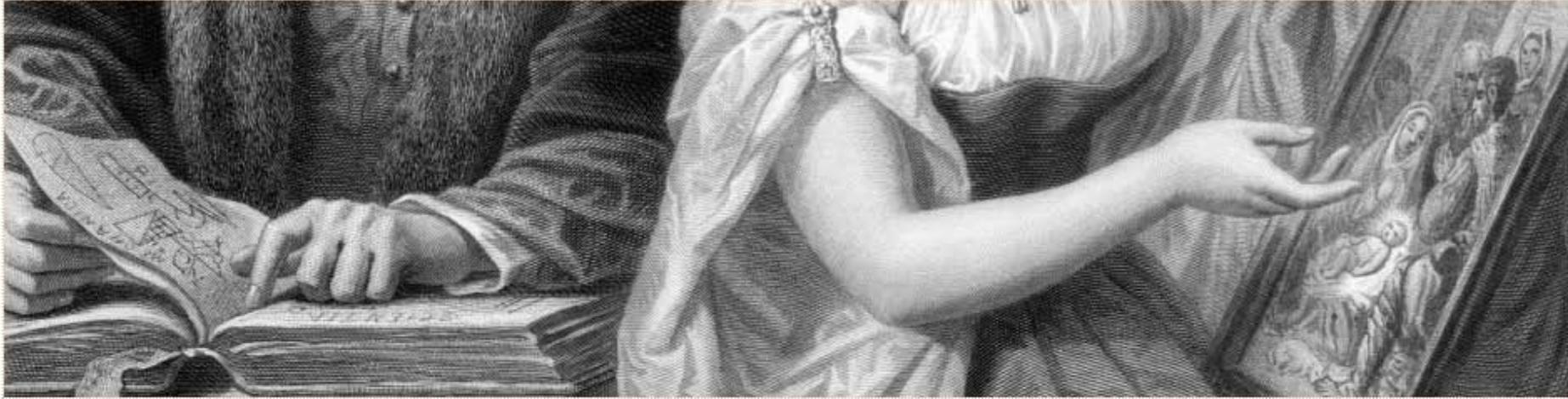
Naturalised Epistemology

- An approach to epistemology that emphasises the importance of applying results from **empirical sciences**.
- Associated with the work of **Quine, Goldman, and Kornblith** (among others).

Outline of Epistemology



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The Godless Theist

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