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The Good, The Bad, and Evidential Externalism

My interest in this talk is in the opposition between evidential internalism, the thesis that one's evidence supervenes on one's non-factive mental states, and its rival, evidential externalism. There are two relatively straightforward, albeit controversial, arguments for externalism, the first citing internalism's crucial role in certain well-known sceptical arguments (Williamson), and the second combining the premises that evidence is factive, that non-inferentially knowing something suffices for it to be part of one's evidence, and that we can non-inferentially know propositions about the external world (Littlejohn, Leite). Arguments for internalism, in contrast, have tended to rely on contentious premises about our access to our own evidence. Here I want to consider Nico Silins's claim in 'Deception and Evidence' (2005) that under natural assumptions externalism entails that a subject in an epistemically good case might be *less* justified in believing some proposition about the external world than her counterpart in the corresponding bad case who has all the same non-factive mental states but is radically deceived, providing a strong consideration in favour of internalism which does not require us to buy into dubious theses about the accessibility of our evidence. I'll offer reasons to be sceptical of Silins's claim, and so I'll suggest that, for better or worse, the strongest arguments for internalism remain those that appeal to some kind of accessibility thesis.